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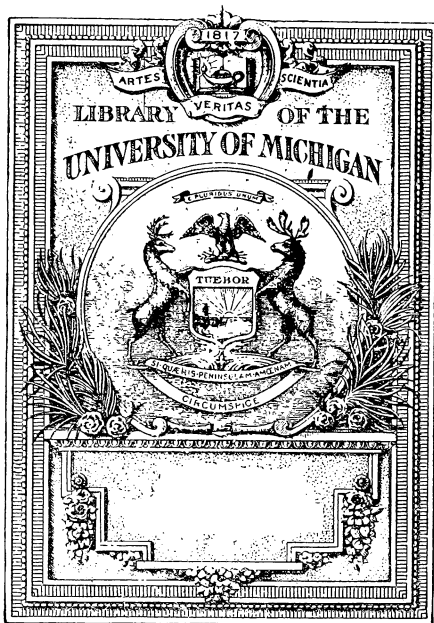
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THE GIFT OF
Professor
Louis I. Bredvold

T H E
PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS
O F

Mr. WILLIAM DUDGEON.

CAREFULLY CORRECTED.

—— While thus laborious crowds
Ply the tough oar, PHILOSOPHY directs
The ruling helm; or, like the lib'ral breath
Of potent Heav'n, invifible, the fail
Swells out, and bears th' inferior world along.

THOMSON.

M D C C L X V.

THE
STATE
OF THE
MORAL WORLD
CONSIDERED.

OR,
A Vindication of PROVIDENCE
in the Government of the
MORAL WORLD:

SHEWING

That there is no other evil in it, but that
arising from the necessary imperfection of
creatures. And that this life is a state of
discipline, to train us up in Virtue, by
which we are fitted for a more perfect soci-
ety, capable of greater happiness in a future
state of existence.

*This infancy of being cannot prove
The final issue of the works of God,
By boundless love and perfect wisdom form'd,
And ever rising with the rising mind!*

Thomson.

First printed in the year, 1732.

A

T H E C O N T E N T S.

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* a 2

T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE subject of the following dialogue will not, I hope, be unacceptable to the public, the design of it being to assert the universal goodness of God in the government of the world, by making all creatures to be proportionably more or less happy as they practise virtue, which tendeth to the good of the whole as well as the good of every individual: and that virtue is the perfection and happiness of all men, and vice their misery by natural necessary consequence; which demonstrateth that it is absolutely impossible for the vicious to commute the matter any way whatsoever, so as to expect to be as happy as the virtuous, but by living the life of the virtuous.

If this small attempt to vindicate providence in the government of the world, from the mistaken opinions of some concerning it, be favourably received; it may, perhaps, encourage some of

greater leisure and abilities to enlarge further upon it. In the mean time, if any think that I am in the wrong, I do assure them that it is not thro' design; so that if they will be pleased to shew me my error, I will receive their instruction with pleasure and acknowledgement.

THE
S T A T E
OF THE

Moral world considered.

A DIALOGUE.

SECTION I.

A—

SEEING, my friend, we are so conveniently met, when we have time, and are not like to be interrupted in this retired place, I would, if you please, enter upon a subject that is attended with difficulties, which I would fain have cleared, namely, “ The origin of
“ moral-evil in the government of a perfectly
“ good Being.”

B—

You could not have proposed a subject more worthy of our consideration, in such a conve

nient time and place. But this antient question hath been so well handled before, that, I think, little more can be said to solve it; yet I say, it will be well spent time to go over what hath been already said by others, so we may be fixed on a subject of such importance. For me, indeed, I never doubt, that whatever particular ills may be, yet there is no evil in the whole of the government of a perfectly good being*.

A——

That nothing is evil in the whole, and yet some ill in the particulars, which make up that whole, sticks mightily with me. That there necessarily exists a cause of all things, the things themselves demonstrate, and that he is a being of infinite goodness, wisdom and power, hath, you know, been gone about to be demonstrated, by some, with admirable success, after this manner. They have gone through the principal phenomena of nature, and shown, “ That what hath been thought ill by some,

* This would be a commendable government in one whose wisdom and power is not perfect, but there is no parallel between perfection and imperfection.

THE MORAL WORLD. 11

“ is only imperfection, which cannot properly
“ be called evil, seeing all created things are
“ necessarily liable to it; nay further, that e-
“ very particular, which we have the means
“ of knowing the circumstances of, is demon-
“ stratively made the most useful and service-
“ able, that the nature of the thing is capable
“ of: and that we ought by parity of reason
“ to conclude the same of those things, which
“ we have not had opportunity or means of
“ coming to so thorough a knowledge of; it be-
“ ing only the want of such a perfect know-
“ ledge of things, that hindereth us from seeing
“ that all things are perfectly good in their
“ kind, as designed and made by a being of
“ perfect goodness, with infinite wisdom to
“ contrive, and infinite power to execute his
“ good intentions.” This they have done with
respect to the natural world, to the full con-
viction of all who attend it. I wish they had
attained the like success, with respect to the
the moral world

B—

If I am not mistaken, they have, by shew-
ing, “ That there is no other evil in the moral

“ world, but what necessarily arifeth from the
 “ abuse of that noble faculty liberty, with
 “ which rational agents are endued.”

A —

I am fo fully convinced by the works of nature, and by the beauty and ftrength of the arguments a priori, that there exists a being of all perfeftions ; who, as he is infinitely happy of himfelf, could have no other end in creating all variety of fubordinate beings, but to communicate to each of them, all the happinefs their feveral natures are capable of ; making the inanimate for the ufe of the animate, and they for the mutual fervice of one another, all confpiring to the good of the whole : I am fo fully convinced of this, I fay, that I cannot agree with them in faying, “ That by the abuse
 “ of the faculty liberty, with which rational
 “ creatures are endued, they have introduced
 “ moral evil, that is, fin and wickednefs, into
 “ the world, contrary to God’s intention, and by
 “ this fubverted the order and harmony efta-
 “ blifhed in the creation.” Is not this a contradiction to infinite wifdom and power, who

could not fail to contrive and execute the means of a good intention ?

But by the way, I think that this character of the deity, namely, That all his other infinite perfections are subservient to the purposes of goodness, will not be disputed. Seeing if we suppose it otherwise, that he is a being of infinite wisdom and power, not governed by perfect goodness, but acting by meer will and caprice, or perhaps malice, then he is the just object of the greatest fear and hatred. Again, if he is a good being, without infinite wisdom, or without infinite power, he is so far imperfect ; though he is the object of love, nay, he is the object of pity too. Such characters of the one true general Cause are as absurd, as that of supposing two, the ideas of which destroy one another.

The attributes of the deity are the different modifications of his all-perfect mind. His knowledge or wisdom is intuitive, as some of ours are ; but mostly our knowledge is attained by reasoning, that is, by comparing the ideas he excites in us, and drawing inferences from them. Justice and mercy cannot strictly be

called distinct attributes, but different acts of wisdom exerted in punishment or forgiveness, as they tend most to the good of the subjects on which they are exercised.

B——

All that I readily grant ; and it is to be regretted that the justice of God hath been so misrepresented, by some in their systems, as to be in the strictest sense a principle of cruelty. But to return.

If this liberty is a possible thing of itself, and given to creatures for good purposes, even for the beauty and perfection of the whole creation ; and as you allow it necessary to the beauty and perfection of the whole, and consistent with the universal wisdom and goodness of the Creator, that there should be different and various degrees of creatures, whereof consequently some must be less perfect than others ; and this liberty implying a natural power of doing evil as well as good, and the imperfect nature of finite beings, making it possible for them to abuse this their liberty to the actual commission of evil ; hence there necessarily ariseth a possi-

bility of evil, notwithstanding that the Creator is infinitely good.

A —

This evil then is no other but what necessarily ariseth from the imperfection of creatures, and is imperfection, which cannot properly be called evil or sin, being inseparable, in some degree, from all created beings, and most consistent with the designs of a perfect Creator.

B —

But let us consider what this liberty is, and how the abuse of it is the occasion of sin, for which we say rational and free agents are accountable.

A —

With all my heart; for that will determine whether men act, or not, contrary to God's intention?

B —

Liberty is defined to be a power of beginning motion, or a self-motive faculty, or a power of acting; which faculty or power is exerted freely upon the last judgment of the understanding. Now, though the will is necessa-

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rily determined by the last judgment of the understanding, this is only in a moral sense, the motive power being still free to act, because the last judgment of the understanding is no physical efficient, but only a moral motive.

Men, being thus naturally free, should determine themselves to act according to the eternal law of reason, which God himself, being perfectly free, determineth all his actions by; and as it is a perfect rule to the most perfect Being, it is certainly a perfect rule to his imperfect creatures, who being made free, and with faculties to discover this law, almighty God requireth that they should act according to it. But they, by virtue of this freedom, without which they would be meer machines, incapable of virtue and happiness, act contrary to this eternal law of reason, and thus introduce vice and wickedness, for which they will be call to account.

A——

That men are not necessary agents in a natural sense, is certain; a necessary agent being no agent at all, but a patient; and the eternal law

of reason or nature, which God requireth rational creatures to act by, being the same with the practice of virtue, which tends to make them happy; because it is inconsistent with the goodness of God, who made them to be happy, to require any thing of them but what tendeth to their happiness; so it is owned by all, by experiencing it true in fact, that every one acteth by the appearance of good, the desire of good or happiness being an innate, inseparable principle from all creatures. But being imperfect creatures, that is, limited in their power and faculties, it is impossible, but that in some cases they should not discover what is their real good or happiness, and so fall into vice, by mistaking their true happiness, and doing that which brings some degree of misery upon them; and this punishment, the natural consequence of vice, will be for their after good, by teaching them how to act in the like cases. Thus every new experience will teach them to pursue their happiness more steadily. In all this there will be found no other evil, but that of necessary imperfection in creatures, still improving by discipline; which is most consistent

with the perfect goodness of the Creator, with every thing's being perfectly good in its kind, and with every thing's coming to pass according to the divine fore-knowledge and decree, which cuts off all accountableness and positive punishment.

B —

You seem to make a moral necessity come to the same effect, with a natural necessity: but though I own it certainly true, that the will is necessarily determined by the last judgment of the understanding; or that motive, which after more or less consideration, seems to be most for our good, yet the self-motive faculty exerteth itself freely: and you likewise intimate that every action of moral agents comes to pass by a moral necessity, according to the divine decrees, else there could be no foundation for pre-science.

A —

The difference between the exertion of the self-motive faculty, and the will's moving the body to action, I do not understand; and that any thing should move body or matter, an inert thing, but the will or mind, is impossible:

and farther the mind cannot move the body to action, without an inclination or disposition to move to one action rather than another, as she is determined by the greatest motive, or that motive which seems to carry the most good with it. Whether prescience can be built on any thing besides this moral necessity, I leave you to explain.

B —

The certainty of fore-knowledge does not cause the certainty of things, but is itself founded on the reality of their existence.

A —

The same may be said of knowledge, without being much to the purpose.

B —

More particularly, the foundation of prescience I take to be this. As one man, who knows another's disposition, can before hand tell what he will do in certain circumstances; and a wiser man still with greater certainty can foretell that: so the deity perfectly knows every one's tempers, and inclinations of their minds, the dispositions and affections of their bodies, and all other external circumstances they shall be in;

and further can tell, what motives will be presented to them, and how they shall be determined by them; all which put together, becomes infinitely exact, and is the foundation of prescience, without being the cause of action.

A —

This seems to come just to what I have said: but though the parallel upon your supposition holds between the wise man's and the deity's manner of foretelling future events, yet the one is not the cause of the action, which the other is. The creature does not, you know, give itself any faculties or inclinations, but all is given to it by the Creator, who, as he is perfectly good, could not give any ill ones; and besides his creating all with certain inclinations or dispositions, he orders all their external circumstances whatsoever, as he sees best, and so cannot but know what motives will be presented to them, and how they will be determined by them, and thus what shall come to pass; which can be no other than what he of his infinite goodness designed, and consequently not evil or wicked, though the actions of some creatures may be said to be evil or

imperfect in respect of the actions of others, arrived to a greater degree of knowlege and perfection.

B——

This seems to lead to absolute fate, every one acting what he could not but do, which takes away all choice.

A——

There is no doubt but that every one does what he sees to be best in every case, and so could not do otherwise. To suppose one could chuse to act otherwise, than what he thought best in every case, is an absurd thing*. If people were necessitated to act otherwise than as they thought best, this would be a sad fate indeed! But to chuse to act upon the best rea-

* I mean at the present time, for he may think, after having got more knowlege, that it would have been better for him to have acted otherwise. But still my meaning may be mistaken here, by some who lay a great stress upon our natural power of acting, or being free from any external natural force to do as we will, as if I denied this. But I do affirm, that every one is conscious that he hath a natural liberty to act as he wills. But then we are also conscious, that we cannot will otherwise in any one case, but as we are determined by the prevailing motive, or that motive which we at present think will be most for our good.

C

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son we can discover, is a freedom and perfection truly valuable. To say we are free from this moral necessity, to chuse among indifferent things, or to chuse one or more things among many others exactly alike, is trifling; because the things being perfectly indifferent, we are as necessarily indifferent which to take: in common affairs, we say, there is no choice among such things, I will take the next to my hand.

B —

To settle what you advance more fully, the desires, powers, faculties, etc. of creatures, should be enquired into, that it may appear, whether some do not abuse them, and so introduce evil and vice of another sort than what can be called imperfection. But let us rest a little.

SECTION II.

B —

HAVING reflected upon what we were last discoursing, I find, that this self-motive or active power is no other than the soul, mind, or will herself, determining the body, which is only a passive instrument to action; and that this mind or will cannot be forced in a natural sense; yet if she was not excited by some inclination or affection, to action, which is in general the desire of good or happiness, she would not act at all, being perfectly indifferent to all action: and the desire of happiness being her inseparable principle, she will always be necessarily determined, in a moral sense, which can only be applied to the will, to act by the prepollent motive, or that which seems to carry the greater good with it. Thus all creatures, of a higher or lower degree, necessarily pursue their good as God hath designed, who also giveth the means of attaining that happiness, which are their several powers and faculties: but as these in all

C 2

creatures are more or less imperfect, and the knowlege how to apply them being best learned by experience, it cannot be otherwise than that all creatures should sometime be mistaken in the pursuit of their good ; yet this mistake of happiness, being some degree of misery, makes them wiser, so that they will pursue it more steadily after. This is the most effectual way of teaching, one not being so well convinced what is his happiness, or what his misery, as when he finds it by experience. But we are next to examine what those powers and faculties, affections and inclinations of the mind of man are, so that we may know that none of them are ill, as some imagine, or at least, we may see if every one keeps the balance among them, and governs them by the chief principle of reason, so as not to apply them to evil purposes. In the mean time, I think, that upon this scheme there is no other difference between virtue and vice than that between perfection and imperfection.

A —

And that is so great a difference as will not fail to make all, who understand it, love and

purſue the one, and forſake the other as much as is in their power. But to go on to what you deſired, which I ſhall do in general, a particular ſyſtem on the paſſions not being what you expect from me : and this I am the more willing to do, that as there is no evil in the natural world, but what neceſſarily ariſes from matter and motion, and the imperfect nature of all created things, which yet are the beſt that can be made ; ſo I ſay, it may be made further to appear that there is no evil in the moral world, but what neceſſarily ariſeth from the nature of imperfect creatures, who always purſue their good, but cannot but be liable to error or miſtake. But as all this evil is only that of imperfection, which is inſeparable from all created things whatſoever, it cannot properly be called evil, wicked, or contrary to God's intention, but perfectly conſiſtent with his good deſigns which he could not fail to execute.

The deſires, affections, or paſſions of the mind are divided, in the general, into ſelfiſh and public. The ſelfiſh or private paſſions are ſuch, as love of life and its conveniencies, love

of honour, resentment of injuries, desire of sensual pleasures, or appetite towards nourishment and the means of generation.

The public passions are such as the desire of universal good or public happiness, friendship, complacency, compassion, love of offspring and relations. The private desires are called interested, as they are planted in us chiefly for our private good. And the public desires are called disinterested, or benevolent, as they are planted in us for the good of others; so that considering the private and public desires as two natural desires or dispositions in us, we cannot be happy, but in pursuing the satisfaction or ends of both those desires consistently with one another.

And this is the foundation for benevolent actions; the end, which the public desires directly excite to, is the good of others, which by experience we find to be our greatest good; which sheweth the inexpressible love and goodness of the wise author of our nature, in thus strictly joining the interests of mankind: so that the generous part, who do good to others out of pure love and affection, come by this,

- to enjoy the greatest pleasure and happiness to themselves; and even the selfish part cannot be happy, but by promoting the good of their neighbours.

Every one is conscious that he hath such affections and passions, and that by their being duly balanced and exercised on their proper objects, he hath pleasure, and on the contrary, pain; it follows that none of them are ill of themselves, but given for good purposes, and that whatever is thought to be ill among them, ariseth from their being not duly balanced, or properly applied, which, you would say, should be the business of the superior faculty, reason, which shall be considered, after observing that a virtuous life is defined, in a large sense, to be such a course of action as sheweth, that both the ends of the private and public desires are consistently pursued, which promoteth, of consequence, both the greatest private and public good; and on the contrary, so far as this is not advanced, through some of the ends which the desires excite to being pursued, and others neglected, such a life is reckoned to be so far vicious. But more strictly, those acti-

ons, which flow from the public desires, are only reckoned virtuous; and those actions which flow from the private desires, while the public ones are neglected, are accounted vicious.

All the desires then being good, or given for good purposes, evil ariseth only from the abuse of them, as may be instanced in one which some have reckoned ill, namely, resentment. This passion is of great use to us in hindering both present and future injuries, from these who may so far mistake their happiness, as to pursue it in opposition to ours. By our resentment they will be taught that it doth not lie there; and when this resentment goes so far with us, as to turn to direct hatred and revenge, this ariseth from a mistaken or wrong opinion, that those who injured us, by thinking their happiness would be promoted in so doing, did it through direct malice and design. This sheweth us how much our happiness consisteth in having true opinions of men and things, and the tendency of actions, that we may pursue the satisfaction of our desires aright, by which is meant the governing of the

desires ; and in doing this is the great use of reason, which we attain thus. When we begin to live in the world, we are governed by others till we come to the use of our reason, which we do by degrees : thus, by experiencing what desires, when satisfied, give us the greatest pleasure or happiness, and by observing by what course or action we obtained such satisfaction, and so comparing one case with another which we know, we reason upon what will be the best for us to do in other cases. In a word, the use of reason in governing and balancing the desires is this. The desires are the springs exciting to action ; our happiness, which is involved in that of the public, is the end, and reason discovers or points out the best means to that end. But the desires, and the faculty of reason or power to apprehend, judge and infer, being so far weak and imperfect in all creatures ; hence arise wrong opinions, and that imperfection of action or vice, in some degree in all creatures, as they are made more or less perfect, consistently with that display of the universal goodness of the Creator, in creating all orders of subordinate beings, who by

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experience and discipline will be going on while they exist, and it seems altogether inconsistent with the perfections of the Creator, to annihilate his works, to attain more and more knowlege, to pursue that happiness designed them.

B —

I perceive, by what hath been said, that it may be made out by instances, that there is no evil desire or affection in nature, and if it were so, it would not only prove the creature ill, but the Creator himself who gave them; but that all which is called vice in action, there being none in intention, ariseth from the desires being weak and imperfect, and the knowlege or wisdom got by comparing and drawing inferences from the ideas which we have from sensation and reflection on what passes within our minds, that is, our knowlege got by reasoning, which teacheth us how to pursue the ends of our desires, being also weak and imperfect; from this necessary imperfection of creatures, I see that all the irregularities of the moral world may be accounted for; which irregularities or evils, though arising from the

neceffary imperfection of creatures, yet to unwary observers feem to flow from evil intentions or difpofitions. But to go through with this, would take in fuch a compafs of time and particulars, that no man is fufficient for it. After all, I think by this view of things, one of the principal arguments for a future ftate is entirely cut off, namely, that brought from the perverted order of things here, vice often flourishing, and virtue falling into diftrefs, which infers a future ftate, in which all things will be fet to rights, by punifhing vice and rewarding virtue.

A —

Was it true that the order of things is perverted here, this argument drawn from it in proof of a future ftate, in which all things are to be fet to rights, proveth rather the contrary. For if things are wrong in this ftate, it is a fhrewd prefumption, that they will be always fo, elfe they muft fay that he is another fort of governor who ruleth in the next ftate, than he who governeth in this: harmony, order and design muft be begun here, elfe we can never expect that they will be improving in the other

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world. So that upon this scheme where every thing is as good as can be, there being no other disorder, vice or misery, but what necessarily ariseth from the finite and imperfect nature of creatures in this their state of infancy, who are still improving by experience and discipline, and attaining greater and greater degrees of perfection, virtue and happiness, which of course fits them for a more perfect society; upon this scheme, I say, a future state can only be built. This added to the natural proofs of the soul's immateriality and immortality, and to that brought from the inconsistency with the infinite power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator, who made creatures to be happy, to annihilate them, and so deprive them of it, will amount to the completest demonstration possible, except immediate possession. More of this after. What is brought by materialists arguing from the powers of matter against the immateriality of the mind or soul, is so ridiculous, that when they come to examine ever so strictly into matter, they know nothing of it, unless it be a mere passive inert thing without any powers at all. But to enquire a little into the present state and the disorders of it.

SECTION III.

A—

TO begin with examining what is meant by vice flourishing, and virtue falling into distress: vice in action, (there being none in intention, all desires exciting either to private or public good,) being the falling short of our greatest good, either by the strength of some private desires, or the weakness of our reason to direct us in pursuing the gratification of our public desires: this will never fail to bring a proportionable degree of misery upon us. And virtue, being the consistent gratification of our private and public desires, cannot fail to make us happy. So that in this sense, virtue flourisheth, and vice brings pain and distress. If we could suppose creatures with desires contrary to ours, so as their happiness consisted in crossing ours; them, as we have a power of perceiving and approving virtue, and disapproving vice, which is by some named a moral sense, so we have also a public sense, by which we are pleased or displeased with pub-

licly useful or hurtful actions ; them, I say, we would condemn as vicious and wicked, tho' with respect to themselves, the gratification of their desires would be good, and approved by their neighbours of the like senses and desires. And it would be as reasonable in them to gratify their desires, as in us to gratify ours. If this were a possible case, whoever of the two sets of beings were more perfect in their kind, and became happy at the others cost, those last would say, that vice flourished, and virtue fell into distress. But no such contradictory case can happen in the government of a perfectly wise and good being.

Vice's flourishing, and virtue's falling into distress then, must be understood with respect to external circumstances. To know the truth concerning this, I leave you to cast your eye abroad into the world and make your observations, and perhaps you may find that though riches and power are of great use even in procuring the means of gratifying of many of our desires both public and private, yet those are not the most happy who possess most of them, or they the most unhappy who have not so large

a portion of them : but that probably all external circumstances are so ordered by the deity, with respect to every one, as is most conducive to keep their desires in the best balance, and to strengthen the public ones, which are like to be of the greatest use to advance our happiness, both in this and a future state of existence.

B —

There seems to be much truth in this. But it being endless to go through particulars, I will give you my opinion in some principal cases. We often observe the rich and powerful, who are the most capable by those means to do the greatest good, in which consisteth the greatest pleasure a rational creature can enjoy, very uneasy ; because they apply them for the gratification of lower desires, as those called the pleasures of the internal senses ; such as delight in music, houses, gardens, dress, equipage ; or in hunting, feasting, and other pleasures of the external senses ; which, though good in their own place, and have a certain degree of pleasure attending them, yet cannot be compared to the pleasures of the moral and public

senses, either for intenseness or duration, nothing yielding so noble, rational, exquisite and lasting pleasures, as the reflection on our virtue, and our being the instruments of advancing the happiness of all those whom our influence can extend to. And on the contrary, we see men in low condition, who mind nothing besides taking care of their families, and maintaining them by their daily labour, and in being, in one word, good neighbours; we see those, I say, for the most part very happy; because they, not having the means, never think of pursuing the pleasures of the great, which are very precarious and of short duration. But the general constitution of the moral world with respect to such things, I take to be this.

The desires, powers and faculties of all creatures being good, and more perfect in the higher orders of creatures, I think it will be owned, that those of creatures of the same rank and order are pretty equal; and as to the differences that may appear in advanced age, they are in great measure owing to external circumstances, as the natural constitution of their bodily organs, education, etc. Those again are

- adapted to their several stations of life, certain qualifications being requisite for magistrates, teachers, etc. which are not requisite for husbandmen, merchants, and mechanics; *et c contra.*

Again, riches and power are given to those, who, the Deity knoweth, will make the best use of them, or not abuse them, so much as those would do who have not got so much. On the other hand, those, who have not got so great riches and power, can act their part better with what they have, than those who have more could have done in their circumstances. And it is worth observing, that those who employ what talents they have given them, tho' fewer or weaker, to the best advantage that they can, are as virtuous or perfect in proportion, as those who have the most and greatest talents, and employ them the best; which maketh all the Virtuous content, easy or happy, being pleased with having done all in their power.—And now, having viewed and considered the state of the moral world with respect to the intentions and actions of creatures and their external circumstances, I must acknowledge

to you, that there is no evil but imperfection in it. Yet you have a great many authorities against you in this opinion. Many crying, that there is not one who doth good, but all are wicked !

A——

Such declaimers always except themselves and a few of their elect party, who, they own too, have their failings or infirmities ; which shows us, that what imperfections those find in themselves, they, through wrong opinion, take to be wicked principles or intentions in all others. But though such imperfect creatures as men are be liable to many mistakes or errors, in pursuing their happiness, which is involved in that of the public ; yet if it was well considered, there will not be so much error this way found in the world, as some imagine ; many, through mistake, pronouncing others, for the neglect of some indifferent actions, which they believe that God will positively reward them for the performance of, to be in damnable errors.

Virtue then being the perfection and happiness of all rational creatures, which all covet

and pursue; and vice their misery, which none love or continue in, when they shall find or be informed how to be more happy; consequently, one man cannot be more serviceable to another, than to present to him such motives and arguments as will convince him that such a course of action, (which are all those actions that promote universal good,) will make him happy, which shorteneth his way to it. Nor can one do a greater injury to another, than to lead him wrong, though both may be done with the same good intention.

B —

The mistakes of some often affect others, and make them so far positively unhappy, such as persecution, oppression, and the like; what shall we say of those cases? can we suppose these will be for the good of the sufferers?

A —

The first of these may proceed from love to others, some thinking that to be of such and such opinions can only recommend them to the Deity; and when they cannot persuade them to be of such opinions by arguments, they would force them to it, which is impossible. But

E 2

more frequently it proceedeth from the wickedness of their reason, as doth always oppression, both parties thinking to advance their happiness by taking from their neighbours either by fraud or violence, what they possess. But if their neighbours, the persecuted or oppressed, get power, they will resent it, as others will also do, who are not so nearly concerned; nay, the sense of mankind turns against them, which is also a punishment to those who love honour and esteem. By all this, persecutors and oppressors will be taught and punished for their errors; besides, when they shall come to the knowledge of their error, which they will certainly do sooner or later, in this or another state, it will be matter of uneasy reflection or remorse to them, for occasioning so much misery to others. And further, many of the selfish desires being probably useful only in this state, the strengthening those, and neglecting to cultivate the public ones, will cast them far behind others in perfection and happiness in the next state.

For those and many other errors of some, affecting others, they may be designed by God

for their good, even for strengthening their virtue, and shewing them more effectually, the evil attending vice, which is the way to hinder them from falling into the like errors, and that they may teach their neighbours, the persecutors, oppressors, etc. the same by arguments, or if that will not do, to resist them, and resent the injuries done themselves, which the law of self-preservation, as well as the good of our neighbours, oblige us to do, so as make those experimentally know, that they can never advance their happiness by injuring their neighbours. And even while they do not meet with this, the very thoughts of being liable to it makes them unhappy.

B ———

This state, then, cannot be called a state of trial, seeing the Deity certainly knows what all his creatures will do, they doing no other thing than what he designed they should do.

A ———

I have called it a state of discipline to train us up in virtue, which you see it is. For as we know that God, who is perfectly happy of himself, could have no other exciting reason to

create us, but his own infinite goodness to make us happy, it is impossible that it could be otherwise, but that when we were created innocent and naked, or without knowledge of what tended to our happiness, and what not, we should be sent here in our imperfect state to improve. And as it is inconsistent with the goodness of God, who made us to be happy, with his wisdom, who could contrive the means to it, and with his power to execute them, to annihilate us, and so deprive us of it; we may certainly conclude, that he will take us to another state, when we are fit to act our part there, where we will be still improving; those, who are farthest advanced here in virtue and knowledge, being capable of the greatest happiness in the next state, which is a strong motive to excite us all to the practice of virtue in this life.

B —

Every one must think that short argument conclusive for the being of a future state, except those who are so weak as hardly to be argued with. I mean those who think the Deity to be an imperfect or arbitrary being, that is, one who acteth by meer will and caprice, inconsistently with any of his perfections. Or those

who think annihilation a less evil than being, which none do, but they who believe that God is cruel, and will make their being a curse to them, by making their misery exceed their happiness. But what should we think will be the condition of children who are removed from this state so soon, that they are nothing improved, nor even upon the other scheme, capable of a trial?

A —

We are so far from knowing every thing here, (the wisest may be said to know but little of what may be known,) that probable conjecture is a sufficient answer to many questions. Such children perhaps, for any thing we know to the contrary, may be sent again, in sounder bodies, into the world to improve. But suppose they be not, as they had no opportunity to improve in the social virtues, so they have not strengthened the selfish desires in opposition to them, and as their being so soon removed, is thus no positive disadvantage to themselves, and may serve some good end towards their parents or others; so the constitution of the other state, as that of this doth, may re-

quire a subordination of beings, which of itself seems necessary to afford matter of action, and so of happiness in every society.

But as what I have advanced, namely, that very particular thing which we know in the moral world, as well as in the natural world, which is adapted to the moral world, is the best that can be made, to make up the best whole, according to the design of the most perfect Being: as we find this, I say, true in fact, as far as our knowledge reacheth; so we have all the reason that can be to conclude, that as we improve in the knowledge of things, both in this state or in others, which God of his infinite wisdom and goodness may have designed to place us in, we will still be more and more charmed and satisfied with this excellent truth.

T H E E N D.

A
L E T T E R
T O T H E
A U T H O R
O F T H E
S T A T E of the M O R A L W O R L D
C O N S I D E R E D :

Wherein some fatisfying account is attempted to
be given of the nature of V I R T U E and V I C E,
the origin of M O R A L E V I L, and the end and
duration of F U T U R E P U N I S H M E N T.

First published in the year, 1734.

F

A

L E T T E R, *etc.**

S I R,

HAVING read and considered your performance, The state of the moral world considered, and your principles quadrating in the main with my own, I could not help wishing the acquaintance of the author: but as I could not have this conveniently, I am obliged to this method of correspondence†. I ever thought this the only scheme that could solve difficulties, but being in some measure new, and consequently unpopular, I soon suspected

* This letter of our author is a vindication of his first tract "The state of the moral world considered" in answer to a pamphlet published at Edinburgh, in 1732. ✓ intitled, Some reflections on the state of the moral world considered; said to be wrote by the celebrated Mr. Baxter, author of Matho, etc.

† This letter was left to the bookseller by an unknown hand, to be conveyed to the author of The state, etc.

the consequences of your breaking the ice, in publishing it to the world. Any one may see your principles to be consistent, and the effect of thought: but none having preceeded you in this way, it was no wonder to me you made not a more full delineation of them, considering with what difficulty any thing of that kind is brought to perfection. This I find the author of *The reflections on your pamphlet* has taken advantage of, to set them in the worst light; and thinking it pity they should be so run down, I have presumed to trouble you with what small help I could contribute towards a further illustration of them. It is to be owned, the *Reflections* contain some objections well worth consideration; but as the writer of them has mixed them with names and insinuations which naturally provoke an author either to answer in the like strain, or else entirely to overlook them (which has made men of polite taste altogether disapprove the way of carrying on a debate by answer and reply, though otherwise a very proper method to clear up difficulties,) I thought, as I am no party, nor personally engaged, I would be under fewer tempta-

tions of that kind. If therefore these reasons have determined you against replying, and if you think this worth publishing, you are welcome to do so; if otherwise, you may make of it what use you please. I am indeed at any rate an enemy to the answering of particular books; but as the common objections advanced by others against this scheme are here laid together, I have chosen it only for a text to save myself the trouble of gathering them from a variety of authors.

For the more distinct management of this subject, I shall reduce the scheme I have laid down to these following heads, “ I. That there is no evil intention in nature. II. That we are morally-necessary agents, or always determined to action by the prepollent motive; and consequently as all our powers, inclinations and circumstances are adjusted and ordered by God, they could not fail to produce such and such effects, and were decreed by him to do so; and therefore, III. That the only way to reconcile the admission of moral evil with the government of an infinitely wise and good Being, is by saying, that it is a necessary imper-

fection: and that the whole of our duration, both in this and another world, is a state of discipline, in which we are only punished for our future good and reformation; or that the end, the only end consistent with the goodness of God of annexing punishment to vice, is to make us wiser and better.

In opposition to which it has been asserted, first, that this position of no evil intention in nature does not solve appearances. Secondly, that we are free agents, free not only from external impediments, but from a determination by motives; and consequently, in the third place, that moral evil is introduced by the abuse of our liberty, contrary to God's design, or is absolute and real evil; and that therefore we will be positively punished for it. If therefore the foregoing positions can be defended, and these objections answered, this scheme of discipline, I presume, stands its ground.

I begin with the first, that there is no evil intention in nature, because all the rest depend in some measure upon it. As this is a question about a matter of fact, one would think it might be the more easily determined, and yet

there is none about which men more generally mistake.

That there is no directly ill intention or malicious disposition in nature, is a principle I always reflected on with pleasure, as on the other hand I ever viewed with horror the common representations given of the natural wickedness, aversion to good, hatefulness, etc. of our fellow-creatures, by those who have the privilege of asserting any thing in a loose way, without reason or explanation. The occasion of so general a mistake, and so much confusion in this matter (next to the ill notions self-love makes us naturally apt to entertain of others) has, as I take it, been the applying the word ill, or wicked, to actions alone, without regard to the disposition, and thinking, that since the action was the same, whatever design it was done with, it was equally ill; whereas, if it be considered that to do any thing from selfish views, or to gratify a private passion, and the same thing from direct malicious views, are as distinct principles of action as any can be, and infer the most different consequences, the mistake would soon appear. It is only the

last that can properly be called ill or wicked, and the first, considered separately from the bad effects it has on others, is so far from being so, that it is the first spring of action and foundation of happiness; but when such a position is laid down, as, that there is nothing evil or wicked in our nature, it is easy to muster up a great many ill actions men have done, and then raise a popular cry, while men never give themselves the trouble to trace actions to their true source and principle.

The absurdity of our being born with a horrid disposition to do mischief, merely for the sake of so doing, may be deduced immediately ✓ from the goodness of God itself; for if so, who would be answerable for the consequences of such inclinations but their author? or how could his punishing them for having inclinations which he himself gave them be an example to others? Besides, it would be giving his creatures inclinations to act directly contrary to himself, and to those good and wise designs he has shown in all his works; for a directly ill disposition cannot possibly serve a good end. But it is spending time to confute what is com-

monly given up now by all that pretend to reason, and even by this author himself*, however inconsistently with what he says elsewhere†. And if we have not such inclinations originally, it follows we can as little raise them in ourselves, nor can a selfish or private passion ever produce or turn to a directly malicious one, because entirely distinct from it, distinct in its very nature.

It is true indeed, we may strengthen our selfish passions too much, and weaken our public ones; we may get ill notions of men, such as may make us condemn and hate them; or, “we may bring ourselves to do ill,” as he says, “in jest, or from mere wantonness and gaiety of heart.” By the way, the very adding these words confutes what he designs to prove, that we do so from direct malice. But still all these are quite distinct principles of action from directly malicious affections; nor is it at all necessary to have recourse to any other to solve appearances. It is a greater degree of the same passion, that prompts one to join him-

* Page. 41.

† Particularly, p. 9. 10.

self to a wife in lawful wedlock, which makes him commit adultery. The same that makes him industrious to provide for his family in a lawful way, which makes him steal his neighbour's money, or rob him of it. To make this plainer still, we shall instance in one of the passions that perhaps looks the likest direct malice of any. Envy is a passion that makes us grudge and repine at the happiness of another. The reason of this is, self-love makes us more sensible of our own worth than others are, and value ourselves more than others do, and perhaps more than we ought to do. Now, upon such a persuasion, it is not only natural, but reasonable, to grudge another a happiness, when, as we think, we deserve it more. But once deprive that other of what we think he enjoys more than he deserves, or give us a better opinion of him, and envy ceases. Is it not plain then from this, that either self-love, or a mistake of others, is at the bottom of this passion? From all this then, it appears, that the actions and wishes this author instances in* are very ill evidences of men's dispositions, till

* P. 9, 10, 11.

he show what notions such had of their fellow-creatures: for to make good his point, he should show, that there are such monsters in nature as hate goodness and a good character, or, at least, that have a direct disposition to do mischief to others, without considering them in a light that makes them the objects of real hatred, which is very plain, Nero, Caligula, and others did, as all tyrants do, and which, it is no wonder many more do, considering what pains such authors as this and the Fable of the Bees are at, to give us ill notions of our species, and to preach up their wickedness, vileness, deformity, etc. Nor do I see how it is reasonable, upon such a supposition, to wish, or to act otherwise. But sure I am, that in all nature he will not find a disposition to hate a truly good character, or to love a wicked one as such.

While I am only pointing out the spring of vice, I hope none will mistake me so far as to construct this as an endeavour to excuse or justify it. The punishment of vice, as I shall show afterward, is every whit as necessary up-✓

on this scheme as the other, and I am sure it answers better and wiser purposes. So that this account of matters only shews our fellow-creatures to be so much better than they are commonly thought to be, and at the same time provides equally well for the peace and preservation of society, which one would think is a very harmless notion, and should give us a better opinion both of God and one another. I cannot therefore but wonder to see this author asserting*, “ That to say the most immoral actions have no evil intention, pulls up the roots of morality, takes away the distinction betwixt just and unjust, right and wrong, good and evil, and opens a door to all violence and endless confusions ;” when any one cannot but be sensible upon the least reflection, that this is what his own may with much better reason be charged with. For what good purposes, in all the world, can such representations of mankind serve, supposing them true, unless to extinguish every thing generous in our natures, to create jealousies, animosities, hatred

* P. 12.

and ill-will? while the other tends as evidently to cement our affections by giving us good notions of one another. But, says he, a little before* : “ It is the intention that gives the action not only the denomination, but the nature of fraudulent, cruel, barbarous ; and hence it is the law chiefly regards the *animus*.” We often give actions these names indeed ; but is it not as common to call want of compassion in a great measure cruelty? A mother that murders her child, one of the strongest instances of cruelty, is said to be cruel to the last degree, though every one knows it is only fear of disgrace, want, etc. or other such considerations, overbalancing the parental affection, that drives her to this ; and I think none doubts, that, notwithstanding this, she has some degree of such an affection, and will rather choose to suckle and foster it, were these considerations removed. No mother, I dare say, ever murdered her child out of mere cruelty. “ And hence,” says he, “ it is that the law chiefly regards the *animus*.” But what is this *animus*, this

* P. II.

intention? Either the selfish affections, or partial benevolent ones, (such as love to our family, or friend, or the like, which are virtuous of themselves *,) discovering themselves in such

* In speaking of the benevolent affections, I would have it observed, that when I affirm them to be in every man, I do not mean that every man, in every instance, is only so far virtuous as he acts from a disinterested extensive view to the good of the whole community or public, (a notion the author of the fable of the bees confines virtue to, and then laughs at,) though every one has this in some degree, and would prefer the good and interest of his own nation to that of any other: but by virtue I mean the benevolent or social affections in general, whether discovered to a more confined system, as that of a family or party, or to a larger one, a city, a kingdom, or the universe; in every one of which gradations, the strength of the affection to the several members of them is wisely made to decrease in proportion to the connection we have with them, and the opportunities of being serviceable to them. Such instances therefore, as that author gives, as a proof of our being intirely, and in all cases, acted by selfish and interested views, are nothing to the purpose. It is indeed ridiculous, either to expect or suppose, that a chimney-sweeper should chuse his employment from a disinterested view to the good of the whole community; but it is as ridiculous to represent him as intirely void of virtue upon that account: for such instances as the choice of a trade, a wife, and the like, are actions that the happiness of one's whole life depends upon, whether that happiness consists in the gratification of the public or selfish affections, as it is evident it does partly of both. The proper question therefor is, whether even this chimney-sweeper, low as his condition is, when considered in the several relations of a father, a citizen, an Englishman, would not show dispositions in

instances, as are inconsistent with the good of society; and these may be the source of the same ill effects in a society that direct malice would be. But be the spring of the action what it will, this is a case the law hath nothing to do with, nor ever considers; because whatever it is, the good of society requires the same punishment.

II. The next thing I proposed to consider, was the account this author gives us of liberty, in opposition to what you have advanced about it. In this section, he gave me hopes, of finding something more decisive than what he had said in the foregoing; but I must beg

some degree respectively suitable to each of these relations? But is he therefor entirely selfish, or void of virtue, because he would prefer the interest of his own country to that of France, or of his own city to that of another an hundred miles distant, or his own family to his neighbour's, or his own life and private happiness to that of any other? Besides, upon this author's supposition, there would be no reason to confine virtue to a disinterested regard to the good of any particular society. According to him, there can be no virtue, unless one act in every instance with a view to the good of the whole world, or rather of the universe; for the same reason that will make it virtuous to act with a view to the good of any particular society, will make it so to act with a view to the good of the smallest family or party, or even of a single person, a friend, or a neighbour.

his leave to say, I was much disappointed. And therefor I shall be the shorter in what remarks I have to make upon it: and the rather because I design to handle this subject at more length, in a distinct discourse, in which I shall particularly shew, that a moral necessity is not only reconcileable with virtue, but that it is the only foundation it can be built upon, which, I am sorry, most of its defenders have been so defective in. I shall therefore, at this time, content myself with two or three remarks upon what he has laid down.

1/*t*. That liberty, according to his notion of it, would be the greatest imperfection, and destroy the very conclusion he would build upon it, of man's accountableness. According to him, the first spring of liberty, and most simple and uncompounded instance of it, is a power of passing from idea to idea, without a motive or reason *. “ In short, says, he, this transition from idea to idea in the mind, is the first spring of liberty, —— or, at least, is the first exercise of our liberty, where the instance is so simple and uncompounded, etc.” And again †,

* P. 33.

† P. 28.

It is no less a contradiction, that a man cannot change the object of his thought, dismiss one idea, and consider another, without——a moral motive, shewing him, that it was preferable to all others.” “ And the same power,” says he, “ we have with respect to motion *, namely, a power of beginning or changing it, without a practical decision of the understanding.” So that, according to this account of the matter, to be free, is to have a power to act without any design, reason or motive; and whenever we do otherwise, at least, so far as we do so, according to him, our liberty must end. If then we have such a power as this, and this power be liberty, certainly one cannot miss to see, that it must be the greatest imperfection; for if, as the more steadily we are determined by good and reasonable motives, the more perfect we are; so next, to a being determined by ill ones, the more ready we are to determine ourselves by no motive or reason, the more imperfect we must be, and act the more absurdly and inconsistently. After such an account of

* P. 30, 31.

liberty, it is pleasant to hear the author saying *, “ The question is not here, whether ever we are determined by moral motives or not ? No body denies, but we are sometimes, and if we were oftner thus determined, it would be the better. But the question is, whether this determination reigns throughout, *etc.*” It seems therefore, as far as it reigns, the mind has no liberty, and yet the oftner thus determined, or the less liberty the better, and the more perfect we would be. Certainly this author should have been more upon his guard against such glaring contradictions, before he charged others so confidently with them.

And as such a liberty would be the greatest imperfection, so, as I said, it would destroy what he intends to prove by it, man’s accountability ; for, how can a man be reckoned virtuous for changing the object of his perception, or passing from idea to idea, or exerting an act of his will, (supposing such a thing possible) without design or motive, if by so doing he happens to do an action materially ill ?

where, at this rate, is the difference betwixt virtue and vice? Hitherto men have been accounted more or less virtuous or vicious, according to the strength of inclination to do what is so, or as they have less liberty, in his sense of the word, to do otherwise; but this is the strongest account of the matter ever was advanced: for here men are made the objects of rewards and punishments, for acting from no reason, no motive. Is it not plain then from this, that let one exert never so many of those free acts of his will, he is no moral or accountable agent, till he is under a moral necessity, or comes to be determined by motives. What then signifies a liberty he is neither better nor worse for? As to what he says, “That the origin of moral evil is owing to——the not adhibiting the consideration of moral motives in weighty cases* :” and afterwards, “The fault in this internal consulting is, that the mind makes a translation of thought too quick, without examining duly every particular, as we deliberate :” I would ask him, whether, when

* P. 26.

† P. 34.

this adhibition of motives is made, it be made with or without a motive? If it be, his scheme is ruined; if not, if made without design, or at random, where is the virtue of such adhibitions? Again, what makes the passing from idea to idea too quickly a fault? Is it not either that the mind is tired and weary with dwelling upon the present object, or hastened forward to a change of idea, by the sollicitation of some passion, which makes it overlook some weighty reasons to the contrary? Or, as he says*, ‘Leans with partiality to a favourite side,’ which are evident motives. “But, says he †, If she herself (the soul) could search out for a motive, or a prepollency of motive, to determine her to act, it is clear she acts already, or wills, directs, determines in this search, and all without a determination.” That the soul frequently searches out for a motive when in a strait, or when any matter of importance is under consideration, is certain; but still it is with a view to act wisely and rationally, or from a fear of acting otherwise. And this, I hope, he will

* P. 37.

† P. 22.

not deny is a motive. Or, if by this he means that the soul, when in an indolent and unactive posture, casts about for some reason of acting, it is plain, that the doing so is still to divert the present uneasiness, or to find a motive or reason of some action; in consequence of which action it proposes, at least, some degree of happiness or pleasure; which shows the absurdity of what he says *, “ That the mind, in such a state, cannot be supposed in concern about the pursuit of its happiness.” As if there were no degrees of happiness, or no happiness but its supreme and ultimate one. The least degree of pleasure is sufficient at such a time to engage it. As to what he says †, “ That the power of acting by motives supposes this, (namely, the power of passing from idea to idea without a motive) as the foundation of it, or that which makes it possible :” I can neither see the least ground for such an assertion, (for, how does the want of a power of acting without motives, make it impossible to act by motives ?) nor, were it true, do I see

* P. 27.

† P. 37. and in other places.

how it would answer his purpose ; for, as I have shown before, it is only so far as we act from motives we are accountable : so that a bare power of acting without them, supposing we had it, would neither make us more or less so.

2dly. The cause and foundation of this author's mistake, and indeed of most of those of his way of thinking, is owing to the not distinguishing sufficiently betwixt a moral and natural necessity. The advocates for liberty always confound these, and tack the consequences of each to the other, and then charge their antagonists with maintaining them, with the utmost injustice. The bugbear that frights them, are such words as our author uses thro'out this section, " Inevitable destiny, irresistible absolute fate, necessary determination, mechanical passive perception, ideal engines to work the mind with, *etc.*" words that have done more to prejudice him and others against this innocent doctrine, than ever the words *moral motives*, as he alleges, have done others in favours of it : whereas, if they would allow themselves to consider, that these two kinds of

necessities are perfectly different, different in nature and kind; and that the matter may be cleared by a very easy and plain distinction, the cause of all these prejudices and outcries would vanish, namely, that the actions of the mind, perceiving, willing, inclining, desiring, *etc.* let them be never so strong or intense, have no resemblance or relation to a natural necessity, such as of one stone's impelling another. Which lets us see how little to the purpose is what the author says in page 21, (and in many other places where he always confounds these two necessities) "Necessary agents (if that were proper) may be acted, wrought, or moved, but cannot be taught." How acted or moved? like a stone or foot-ball? or who, that pleaded for a natural necessity, ever said so? what relation has this to an act of willing, or a determination by moral motives? In short, I can hardly help persuading myself, that this long and intricate debate about liberty, turns upon the definition of a single word, which those of his party never attend to.

Laſtly, All the inſtances he uſes for a proof of this liberty, not only fail of proving his point, but a great many of them prove the quite contrary. He ſays *, “ When a man looks out at a window upon the fields, he muſt ſee ſomething if his eyes are open ; but it would be a puniſhment to him to fix his eyes always on one point, though it is arbitrary to him to direct his view a longer or ſhorter while to it.” “ And afterwards †, To ſay, that one could not turn his eye from a point——till he had conſulted how and where to carry it next, would be ſpeaking againſt common ſenſe.” If then it would be a puniſhment, is not this puniſhment, be what it will, the cauſe of changing his view ? The plain matter of fact in all caſes is this. The mind is ever reſtleſs in purſuit of what is pleaſing or agreeable, and when it has for the preſent nothing to give it entertainment, it caſts about where it hopes moſt probably to find it. No man, I dare ſay, ever looked out a window but to ſee ſomething. If his eyes meet an agreeable object, that fixes them ; if not, or if

* P. 29.

† P. 30.

it is tired with viewing such an one long, it is plain these are the motives that set him again a roving, and turning his eyes another way. The case is the same with thought. The mind, when in a remiss, indolent, or careless posture, (which the author miserably mistakes for his liberty ; whereas, when the mind has no matter of moment to take up its thoughts, it is as much determined to entertain what gives it the least degree of pleasure, as the balance is turned with the least grain,) finding nothing to rouse or engage it, dismisses one thought, and takes up another, in hopes always of finding one more agreeable than the last. In the note at the foot of page 31. he says, “ If this moral necessity obtains, it must not only be with respect to the action itself, but also to the time, place, manner, and degree of it ; for if there is **not** a moral motive for every thing of this kind, **some** circumstance will be left arbitrary, and therefore indifferent, to the ruining of the whole scheme.” And he instances particularly in striking the arch of a circle, and asks, “ Whether

the compasses shall be opened to half an inch radius, or 3 4ths, 7 8ths, *etc* ?” But who does not see, that after one is confined to such an arch as his compasses and extent of his paper admits of, he takes up with that open and centre that comes readiest to hand, if it be not altogether inconvenient ? and from this plain motive, that the finding more exact ones would not answer the trouble of searching for them. All his other instances are answered the same way.

As for that shame, fearfulness, remorse, and uneasiness that attends the practice of vice, which he further urges as a proof of this doctrine †, I answer, this is one mean wisely appointed by God for our reformation ; but that whatever it proceeds from, it supposes nothing like his liberty : for, whether it arise in a vicious man, from his acting contrary to his moral sense or conscience, a sense that God has implanted in every man, by which we necessarily approve good actions in ourselves and others, and disapprove ill ones ; or from a consciousness that he has incurred the resentment, disappro-

† P. 37, 40.

bation, and contempt of others, the necessary effect of self-defence in them, which no man can endure the want of, even in thought, he must of consequence be ashamed, grieved, and have remorse; and this remorse must follow, without supposing the agent free in his sense of the word.

He concludes with saying, “ If these few plain observations had been adverted to by Mr. Leibnitz, Collins, and others of that way, much needless debate and writing about liberty and necessity might have been saved.” Whereas I cannot help thinking if he had attended to what they had said on this head, he would have spared many of his observations, which are answered by them over and over again.

In short, all the power a man has or can have, or is necessary to have in order to moral agency, is of acting, (beginning, ending, or changing motion or thinking,) upon his having willed, and of willing upon a preceeding motive or reason. To assert a power of willing without a motive, is both an inconsistency, and would be the greatest imperfection; if to act without a reason be unreasonable, and if

we had it, we would only be moral agents so far as we made no use of it, or acted only by good or ill motives of action, or were necessarily determined, (morally so I mean) and so at any rate, his account and defence of liberty is nothing to the purpose.

Our author proceeds to apply his notion of liberty to answer some positions of your's, which he calls "difficulties in natural religion"; the fallacy of which reasonings will the more easily appear, as they stand or fall with this account of liberty. One or two of them we shall instance in just now, the rest we shall have occasion to consider by and by.

One of the uses he makes of it is to show*, in what cases we yield to the solicitation of the stronger motive, and how we come to do so, in opposition to what you assert, that we do so always and necessarily, which he calls the only specious argument of the adversaries of liberty, and which he unjustly says, they pretend is enough to exculpate us whatever we do: for, as I shall show afterward, a liability to pu-

* P. 39, 40.

nishment for our mistakes and wrong choices, is upon this scheme absolutely necessary, both for the good of society, and the reformation of the offender ; though the infliction of positive punishment would be both useless and cruel. After that, he goes on to show in what cases we yield to the sollicitations of the stronger motive, namely, when we have contracted habits, and how we are gradually brought to this, which he says *, “ is a necessity and slavery of our own procuring.” The way that we are brought to this pass he tells us is, “ that at first we do the action without consideration, motive or reason, or by precipitating the transition, “ as he calls it ;” “ and if we do it once, we may do it a second and third time, till at length a habit is fairly sprung up, and one comes to do with design what at first he did with none.” It is an unlucky thing men should so often hit chance-ways on the wrong side, without any design to either good or bad, and that tho’ we have good inclinations at first, as he owns †, which one would think would be sufficient to

* P. 39.

† P. 41.

cast the balance on the right side; yet, that they should at last be cursed with a habit for acting so innocently. I think one may trust this reasoning to any one without a confutation; only I would ask him a question or two upon it. After how many of these free repetitions of the action do we act necessarily? Next, whether or not, when we begin to act from a motive or reason, or necessarily, we are not upon this scheme blameless? I always innocently thought the stronger the inclination, or greater the necessity, the more blame-worthy, or, which is the same thing, the more necessity for punishment; but this indeed is more comfortable philosophy, and one may now go on with a good conscience in vice, as soon as a habit is contracted, for he is blameless in all what follows, because it is morally necessary, and the matter is as ill as it possibly can be with him, for having once or twice done this action, without design at first. He says indeed *, “ That such an one is no more excusable than a man would be who should willingly

* P. 40.

disable himself from working, out of a view to be maintained on charity." But this is a case no way parallel; for here the man is supposed purposely to disable himself with that view, and to act from a motive contrary to what he builds his reasoning upon; but I dare say he will not allege that ever any man drank or whored with a view to contract a habit, which too would be acting from a motive. I have known such curse themselves for the inclination, but never met with such an instance.

Another use he makes of this his doctrine about liberty is, to confute what he said, page 43. you had alleged, that the fore-knowledge of the deity is the cause why the thing fore-known comes to pass; whereas, it is plain to any one who consults the passage he refers to, that you make it only the effect or consequence of our being necessarily determined by those circumstances God has placed us in. However, he rectifies the state of the question afterwards*, and in his reasoning upon it, one cannot miss to observe what straits he is put to, and how backward

* P. 44.

and forward he talks. He makes indeed a great show of modesty and caution in the matter, and says it were better not to pretend to investigate the reason of God's fore-knowledge, and yet to confess the thing, because it is an undeniable perfection ; though at the same time he boldly charges you, and all that have taken your way of explaining the divine attributes with denying them. But he must not think to get off so, for if his way of doing here be not a denying them, I do not know what is so. He says*, “ When we act in cases of indifference, suppose,——what becomes of the prepollency that should guide, and, if I may say so, illuminate the divine prescience ? I answer, there is none indeed in the world to do it, and therefore prescience on this supposition is an absolute impossibility. For let none think this is only a difficulty we cannot explain ; it is an unanswerable demonstration of the impossibility of it, as will be evident to any that but defines to himself the terms indifference, or liberty of indifference, as used by him, and prescience ; because,

* P. 44.

at this rate, all possible connection betwixt the foresight and the action is broke; for, that a thing shall certainly come to pass, and a thing may possibly not come to pass, are contradictory ideas.

But to make your argument amount to a direct demonstration, I observe, that upon any supposition (unless a direct denial of it) pre-science can only be the consequence of a decree. To allow this author all the advantage possible, I shall suppose for once that we are free in his sense, and then show how this must be true even upon that supposition. Only, I hope he will grant me, that what God foresees certainly to happen, or what will certainly happen, will certainly happen, suppose it be in a consistency with freedom. One then that does an ill action, determines himself this is foreseen as certain-by God. This fore-knowledge then must have some reason or foundation; for if there be no reason, it is impossible and contradictory. This reason then (according to our supposition) must be not in God, or any chain of causes and effects he has established; but in the man himself: but this could not be unless this

present scheme, and this man in particular, were to exist, and place and opportunity were given him for doing this ill action freely. It is impossible this can be, unless some persons, places, opportunities and circumstances were to proceed these, and others these, and others these, and so on, till we come to the first cause of all. This first must be set a-going some how, and as God is the first cause, he must do it. Now I would fain know the difference betwixt determining or decreeing one's acting what is morally evil, by placing him in circumstances in which he is necessarily and unerringly determined by motives, and setting a scheme a-going in which he foresees that one free agent will certainly act so and so, and in which this will afford occasion to another's likewise acting freely, but certainly so and so, and that to another, and so on, though the reasons of their doing so be not his decree, but their own free-will: for, as he is author of the first spring, and certainly foresees what will happen upon setting it a-going, (no matter what the ground or reason of this foresight be, if it be certain,) upon the setting of this first

a-going all is determined by it; for upon the doing or not doing of this all will either certainly follow, or be certainly prevented. The decreeing this first then is equivalent to the decreeing the whole, or every particular event. Now, as this is foreseen by God, as what will certainly happen upon setting the scheme agoing, therefor prescience can be only the effect or consequence of a decree. *Q. E. D.*

He concludes this head with a passage of Dr. Clarke, who agrees with him in this point, but all of a sudden he drops it, as if it burned him. I shall therefor cite the whole for him. His words are very observable. “The manner,” “says the doctor*,” how God can foresee future things without a chain of necessary causes, is impossible for us to explain distinctly, though some sort of general notion we may conceive of it; for as a man, who has no influence over another person’s actions, can yet perceive before-hand, what that other will do, and a wiser and more experienced will still with greater probability foresee what another, whose

* Demonstration of the being and attributes of God.

disposition he is perfectly acquainted with, will in certain circumstances do, and an angel, with still less degrees of error, may have a further prospect into men's future actions; so it is very reasonable to apprehend, that God, without influencing mens wills by his power, yet, by his foresight, cannot but have as much certain knowledge of future free events, than either men or angels can possibly have, as the perfection of his nature is greater than that of theirs." Now, is it not evident from all this, that that truly good and learned man unluckily made a supposition, which if he had but duly attended to it, he would have seen to confute what he designed to illustrate by it: and this I suppose the author was sensible of. For if it be but added to what he there says, that the way that God can with certainty, or a man of experience, or an angel, can, with any probability, foresee the future actions of another, is only in consequence of his being determined by his disposition and circumstances; and that there is this remarkable difference with respect to God, that he is the author of this disposition, and orderer of these circumstances, or,

which is the same, lays a train of causes and effects, by which the man shall contract such a disposition, and be in such circumstances, the case just amounts to what you made it; for the doctor makes no difference in the way God and the man of experience foresees the man's future actions, namely, in consequence of his being determined by his disposition and circumstances, but only on the certainty of it.

If then we are morally necessary agents, or always determined to action by the prepollent motive, as I have shown, then it evidently follows, that as all our powers, inclinations, and circumstances are adjusted and ordered by God, they could not fail to produce such and such effects, and were decreed by him to do so; which was the other part of this head. This, I think, needs no proof; for if we are always determined by the prepollent motive, and if God at first gave us all our inclinations and dispositions, and a good being, as I have shown, could never give us ill ones; and placed us in such circumstances, then it evidently follows, that we could not but be determined to a particular way of action by these circumstances and

dispositions; and therefor, since he so adjusted them, he must have adjusted them with this very design, that we should be so determined. Accordingly the frequency and greatness of vices, are they not ever exactly in proportion to men's opportunities and temptations, the weakness of their reason, and strength of passions?

But in opposition to this, it is asserted by our author, "That we corrupt these faculties given us originally good by our Creator, and contract inclinations he neither gave nor designed; and all still by the same wonderful power of acting without a motive*." And particularly he tells us, "Would it not be ridiculous to say, we got the inclinations to snuff and brandy from the Creator, which costs us so many qualms before we can acquire them?" Had he instanced in roast beef and pudding, the absurdity would have been a little more glaring, though the inclination to snuff and brandy may just as properly be said to be given us by God, all of them being equally artificial preparations.

* P. 41, 42.

Not that God at first gave us directly such inclinations, which is a way of speaking, he only takes advantage of; but that a train of causes and effects were laid by him, in consequence of which such inclinations would certainly be produced. The plain case here is this: God gives us general appetites, to which are suited a vast variety of objects; and it is not a whit more absurd to say, as I shall show afterward, that God, for good and wise ends, designed some should contract habitual inclinations to these, than that he should furnish the materials for gratifying these inclinations. And I am sure I may appeal to the experience of all that ever used snuff or brandy, if ever any of them began the practice in so whimsical a way as he alleges, and took what was so disagreeable to them, from no reason or motive; and if they were not, on the contrary, determined to the first, either for company's sake, or an inclination to comply with the prevailing custom, or to divert themselves, or keep time from being irksome or tedious: and to the other, either from some pleasure it gave the taste, or for the sake of company, or being thought good

neighbours, or such like reasons or motives. And do we not every day see instances of as whimsical customs as that of snuffing begun, for the sake of being thought the authors of a fashion, or other such ridiculous reasons? What he adds further in answer to this, shall be considered afterward.

Having thus paved our way, we shall now be able to proceed, in the third place, with more clearness and ease, to the consideration of the scheme itself, namely, that since every thing was designed by God, to be as it is, and vice must be so too, since it takes place: therefore, the only way to reconcile the admission of it, with the government of an infinitely wise and good being, is, by saying, that it is a necessary imperfection, and that this is a state of discipline, in which we are punished for our mistakes and faults, only in order for our future good and reformation; or that the end, the only end consistent with the goodness of God, of annexing punishment to vice, is to make us wiser and better.

If therefor it be made out, *1st*, that vice is,

as you express it, a necessary imperfection * :
 2dly, That this is a state of discipline, in which
 we get experience, by the punishment annexed
 to our mistakes and vices, or in which we are
 punished only for our future reformation and

* That I may not be mistaken, by a necessary imperfection, I do not mean that vice is an imperfection, which our present imperfect natures only make necessary; but which, as some think, would have been better away, had it been possible they could have admitted it; and far less do I mean an imperfection absolutely ill, and introduced by the abuse of liberty, contrary to God's design; but an imperfection absolutely necessary, or which is necessary for making up the best whole, and so is both decreed by God, and worthy to be so, as will appear from our following reasoning. I observe, that there is an ambiguity in the word *best whole*, even among the most judicious writers in defence of liberty; for though they allege, that moral evil is absolute evil, yet they say, it being impossible for God to create us without this liberty, and consequently without a power of abusing it, it was better so to create us, than not to create us at all; and so this is still the best possible world. And indeed, at this rate, so it may, and yet be a very indifferent one. I have therefor endeavoured, in opposition to this, to show, how the supposition of the absence of moral evil would be a greater evil than its taking place. This reduces the question to a clear state. As for the old scheme, which is for absolute decrees, and yet will needs have moral evil to be absolute evil, and to be permitted by God, to be introduced contrary to, or at least beside his design and decree, I suppose the absurdity of it is now seen by every one. This is the only scheme, as far as I can see, that takes off all difficulties; for if vice be not absolutely ill, but, on the contrary, serves, upon the whole, a good end, there can be no ill in decreeing it.

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amendment ; and that even the punishments, inflicted by society, are made ultimately to serve this end ; and *lastly*, That this state will be carried on in another world, and that punishment can only serve the same end there that it does here : if these assertions can be made good, we shall do all that is requisite to prove what we proposed.

As to the 1st, that vice is a necessary imperfection. I have already shown, that there is no evil disposition in nature, that the material part of vice, the external action considered apart from the disposition it proceeds from, is neither good nor ill ; or that vice is equally vice, whether it be shown in action or not. One who has such a love for money, as that he would murder his neighbour for it, had he a strong enough temptation, and convenient opportunity, is the same ill man, whether ever he meet with such an opportunity or temptation, or if he meet with them, is equally vicious before and after the fact. And so, *he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.* If then the whole of vice consists only in the

disposition, and if there be no evil disposition in nature, and vice is nothing but an irregular degree of a selfish affection, that is not evil in itself, or a mistake of one another and our true interest; then it evidently follows, that the question commonly thought so difficult, “Why vice is admitted under the government of an infinitely wise and good being?” amounts precisely to this, why God hath proportioned so variously the reason, capacities, tempers, passions, appetites, circumstances, *etc.* of men: and the same reason will account for the greatest vices, that accounts for the different constitutions of men, the different powers of reason, the different strength of passion; because these are the only springs of vice, and what accounts for the least difference of this kind, will account for the greatest.

The only difficulty therefore now remaining, is to show what makes it requisite, that in many cases our reason should be so weak, our affections so balanced, and our circumstances so ordered, as to bring so much misery both upon the persons themselves and society, and how this imperfection comes to be necessary.

Now this, I hope, will admit of a very easy solution.

It is allowed, I think, by all, and indeed it is plain of itself, that so complicated a scheme, as that of this world, requires an inconceivable variety of creatures, and among the several species of these creatures as great a variety of tempers, capacities, and circumstances, and as great a variety of events suited to these, to answer the ends of providence. This is visible even among the brutes, and still much more among men. And it is this subordination of creatures, this difference of inclinations and pursuits, that makes so beautiful a contrast in the great drama, that lays a foundation for action, intercourse, and a plot, which is absolutely necessary for the happiness and improvement of mankind, and which there could be no happiness, except what arises meerly from the gratification of sensual appetite.

If then such a scheme be necessary, it is evident vice must be so at the same time. If vice were absolutely evil, it is plain God could, if he had so pleased, easily prevented it, without having recourse to so whimsical a supposition,

as the abuse of our liberty for its being introduced contrary to his design ; for since he has made higher orders of creatures, less liable to vice, or who improve faster in knowledge and virtue ; since we find, that he has at first so balanced some particular men's passions, or placed them in such circumstances, as that they have very little inclination or temptation to some particular vices, it would have been equally easy to have made every man altogether without passions, and so to have made them perfectly stupid ; or, by supplying all our wants, and satisfying all our desires, he could have cut off all occasion of complaint * or injustice. But

* The end of men's uniting in society is, that they may have their several wants supplied with the greatest ease and conveniency : and God has wisely made our wants so numerous, on purpose that we might be driven to this only method of improvement : and he only, who is infinitely wise, can adjust and proportion them, so as to produce the greatest good in the whole. Now, if we be supposed creatures, whose reason is imperfect, and who have passions, wants, and desires, the means of gratifying which are not always laid to our hands, and who, at the same time, are placed in society with others, as we plainly are, then vice must be the necessary consequence of this. As things then are at present constituted, there is a necessity of vice's taking place from nature, and there is a necessity of fitness, that things should be so constituted, otherwise there had been no foundation for improvement in knowledge, goodness, or perfection.

then, is it not evident, how intirely this would have spoiled the beauty of the scheme? A world of such perfect beings, who had all their wants supplied, and, if it were possible, who had all equally so perfect a knowlege, as never in one instance to mistake their true interest, and never to do the least fault or wrong to others, however happy such a state is commonly imagined, would be the greatest absurdity and imperfection, greater than making all creatures of one species, than making them all angels or men: for, what would such a set of

To have created us without passions, would have been, as I said, to have made us stupid; and for any creature to be made perfect at first in knowlege or goodness, or indeed to be created with any degree of them, is a natural impossibility. So that the order of things lies thus. It is impossible we, or any set of creatures, could be made at first with all degrees, or indeed with any degree of perfection; and therefor we must advance toward it by a gradual improvement, though some may be made capable of improving faster than others. In order to this, it is necessary we should be placed in society. To force us thus to unite, and keep united, it is necessary we should have a variety of desires, passions, capacities, wants, *etc.* suited to the various offices that are requisite there; which, as God is wise and good, must be adjusted with infinite wisdom and goodness. And lastly, this makes vice necessary; for the same reason that makes such a variety of capacities, passions, wants, *etc.* necessary, makes vice so too, or rather in propriety of speech, vice is nothing else.

creatures do? how employ themselves? what room here for action, for hope, for improvement, or for happiness, unless of the dullest kind? If all men's affections and reason were perfectly regular in the common sense of the word, what need of any to teach or instruct others? what need of constituting societies, and fencing them by laws and sanctions? what ground for debates to improve the understanding? God might have immediately supplied us with all the necessities of life without toil or labour; but then, what occasion for a beautiful intercourse of actions, for such a variety of trades, manufactures, occupations among men all working to one another's hands? In short, where is the foundation for growing either in knowledge or goodness, unless such a scheme were laid for contracting acquaintance with men and things, for converse, correspondence, and improvement?

It is true, indeed, as in the natural so in the moral world, by reason of the complication of the scheme, it is impossible for us to show the consistency of every particular event of providence, with the general design of our Creator;

nor would it, perhaps, be of very great use if we could; and yet the general laws and rules upon which God acts in both, and the ends he proposes, stand demonstrably proved. But as some have taken advantage from such events in the natural world, to make objections against the goodness of God, so others have gone the same way to work in the moral; while in truth all the strength of such objections lies only in our ignorance. It is to the not taking an extensive and generous enough view of the designs of creation, that such cavils are owing.

To give an instance for the illustration of this, the desire of propagating our species is, perhaps, the occasion of more irregularities, intrigues, whoredoms, murders, rapes, lies, diseases, *etc.* than any one passion; but at the same time is the source of much more happiness, the foundation of families, of conjugal and parental love, nay, of the continuation of our species and society itself. This passion, every one knows, does not arise before such an age, and with a particular violence, and is much stronger in some than others, and very often strongest where reason is weakest. Now,

it is evident, that the violence of it is the cause of many irregularities and evils, and that its ill effects are more or less, according to mens different constitutions, circumstances, and the difference of their reason to manage this passion. Is it not plain then, that the forementioned evils are the necessary effects of necessary causes established by God, and consequently must be designed by him, as he is wise and good, to answer wise and good ends? And how they may do so, any one may see, that has read a well wrought tragedy. But on the other scheme, things ought to have been quite the reverse of what we in fact find them *.

* I hope that none will imagine from this account of matters that I have given, that I coincide with the fable of the bees's notion, "That private vices are necessary for the welfare and prosperity of a nation;" for there is a wide difference betwixt this, and saying, that a variety of tempers, circumstances, *etc.* is necessary for society, for improvement, and an intercourse of offices, which I have reduced the question to; and that what mistakes and vices happen in consequence of these are designed by God, to answer wise and good purposes in the whole, which appears, as I shall show afterwards, from their being allowed by God to happen. This is certainly true, and yet in proportion, as their tempers and circumstances lead them, in some particular instances, to do what is vicious, to injure others, or mistake their own true interest, they must be unhappy. The case is the

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From this then it appears how inconsistent the author of *Reflections, etc.* is with himself, when he says *, “ That it is agreeable to the variety and gradation of the works of God, that there should be superior orders of beings, that is, that there should be some orders of creatures liable to fewer mistakes, weaknesses, wrong choices, *etc.* than others; for if vice, or moral evil, be absolutely evil, or introduced contrary to God’s intention or design, the less liable to it the better.” Why then are there any inferior orders of beings created, that should be more liable to it than others? Unless he say, it was wise and good that some creatures should be exposed more to mistakes, temptations, and wrong

same with societies, as with private persons or families, as I may possibly show upon another occasion; all nations must ever prosper or decay in power and wealth, in proportion to their virtue, frugality, and industry, and the growth of arts and sciences. It may indeed answer wise and good ends in the whole, that some nations as well as particular persons, should be more vicious, and mistake their true interest more than others, as is evident from that ignorance and barbarity that God sees fit should prevail in many nations; for if vice be absolute evil, it is altogether unaccountable, even upon the scheme of liberty, that God should never interpose to remedy so general a depravation; but then, for the same reason, it must be wise and fit, at the same time, that they should suffer for it, and be unhappy in proportion.

* P. 38.

choices than others ; and yet that it was good and fit, that all should equally shun these, and that moral evil should never have existed. For, if this was the end of God's creating us, certainly the surer methods were used to overtake this end the better, unless he say, God made us liable to mistakes, designedly made us so ; and yet that he expected we should never mistake. In short, it is impossible at all, upon his scheme, to account for such variety and gradation. It is still more unaccountable upon his principles, that among men some should be born with stronger inclinations to some particular vices than others, if it were wise and fit, and for the good of the whole, that they should equally shun them. For to say, that God made such difference of constitutions, and laid some under so much stronger temptations than others, and yet to expect, that all this should occasion no difference in their behaviour and actions, and that he designed, that not one morally ill action should ever be committed in consequence of such temptations *,

* And this length he must go ; for if it can be but shown, that a morally ill action can but possibly, in

is very strange ; for certainly, the same reason that makes it unfit that God should design what is morally evil, makes it likewise unfit he should design any thing that has a greater tendency than another to bring it about.

If then the present state of things could not be otherwise, if such differences of reason, constitutions and passions, which are not ill of themselves, be necessary for the happiness and beauty of the present scheme, and vice be the natural and necessary consequences of these, or rather the same with them, it is evident vice is just as necessary, or no more than a necessary imperfection.

And it is upon these principles only we can account for that great seeming irregularity that we see observed, with respect to the health, strength, constitutions, fortunes, *etc.* of men here ; how much happier the vicious are many

any one case, answer a better purpose than the not allowing it will do, which one would think could scarce be denied, it is not only consistent with goodness to allow it, but God, as he is good, must decree and approve of its happening. And it is owned almost by all, that God over-rules the worst actions for good ends ; how consistently with a denial of his decreeing them, any one may judge from what I have said.

times in these respects than the virtuous, and how they have it in their power to kill, persecute, and maltreat them. The true solution of this is, that virtue and prosperity have no necessary connection with one another in the nature of things. It is indeed wise and fit, that in the result of things pain should be the certain consequence of vice, and happiness of virtue, because otherwise there would be no discouragement from the one, or encouragement to the other; but that therefore the virtuous should always be happy in their health, fortunes, *etc.* is no conclusion at all; for better ends, more advantageous to the cause of virtue, may be served by this. As we are finite creatures, indeed we would always wish it were so, because we would wish those who have most inclination to do good, had most power to do it; but if we saw, for instance, that the giving a well inclined man a great fortune would have a bad effect on his mind or body, or upon society, (and how often does wealth or power produce pride, luxury, or violence, in these, who in a low station were humble, sober and just!) in this case, we could not but see a plain

reason why he should want it, and another less virtuous rather have it, if no such ill effect would follow his getting it. Misery or wants may prevent vice in the innocent, as well as reform the guilty, and this makes the afflicting them both good and just. And hence the absurdity of merely positive reward.

These two questions then are perfectly distinct. Why is misery made, in the event, the certain and necessary consequence of vice, and why are vicious men frequently happy in their health, circumstances, power, while the virtuous are otherwise? And unless it can be shown, that no possible good end can be served by this, which is impossible to do, this argument includes nothing. Now how often, even in this dark state, do we see the contrary? is not affliction the school of many eminent virtues? do not misfortunes teach us patience, humility, submission? what desolation and confusion, and seemingly unjust changes of fortune follow wars? but do they not, at the same time, afford the noblest opportunities of forming men's minds to fortitude, to honesty, and the strictest friendship? and is it not thence we

are furnished with such examples of heroism, as are the subjects of entertainment and imitation to future ages? This then shows beyond contradiction, what good ends the vices of men may serve towards others that suffer by them. Hence then, we may be furnished with an answer to such questions as the author of *Reflections, etc.* puts*; “We expect no redress, says he, for being innocently oppressed, massacred;—— Is it, let me ask, tyranny to punish the oppressor, and not tyranny not to restrain the oppression? to let the innocent groan on? What thoughts of the deity does this suggest? He will not punish himself—the guilty too: but hath his torturers of the innocent, perfectly agreeable to his designs!” I answer in a word by another question, whether it be not the same thing for these innocent persons to be cut off by the sword of a Nero or Alexander, as to be carried off by a plague, swallowed by an earthquake, or overflown by the sea? Here then is a case where innocent men are tortured perfectly agreeable to the designs of God, it being his

* P. 16.

own immediate work, unless he suppose the natural world as much from under his management as he makes the moral ; and where no redress can be expected, unless he seek it from one to whom the least imperfection cannot be imputed without blasphemy. Is it not plain then from this, that he may make oppressors the instruments of doing what was otherwise fit and proper to be done, and for which he had wise reasons, though possible we may not know them ? If those of his way will look about them a little, they will find the world filled with instances of injustice in their sense of the word, which vicious men have no hand in bringing about. It is every whit as unjust, according to their abstract notions of justice, and answers just the same purposes, that a bad man should be heir to an estate to which he has a legal or just right, or which falls to him by wise and good laws, while another that deserves it wants it, as it would be for the first to rob the second of it, the effects of both being the same. This then is a case he cannot but reckon ill or unjust, which yet has not happened contrary to God's design, by men's abusing their liberty,

and which must be accounted for, and justified some how or other, without having recourse to his refuge, of things being wrong, or the state of the world distempered, unless he say, God never designed men should establish good laws, or that they should be altered or broke, every time this happens. Again, a fleet is left in a storm at sea, and a just cause with it. Here the men, and the society to whom they belong, suffer just as much as if their commander had been the occasion of this loss through unskilfulness, treachery, or cowardice. Now, upon this scheme, though the event be the same in both cases, yet in the one it must be absolutely right, in the other absolutely wrong; whereas, on the other, there is no difficulty in accounting for such instances. Every thing runs easily, every thing is consistent with itself, and with the goodness of God. God designs all that happens, and all is good. Appearances, the most cross to the cause of virtue, serve in the whole a wise and good end, and yet not the least encouragement is given to vice. But on the other, no answer can be made to endless objections; all is confusion, patching,

mending; all the numberless instances of vice are absolute evils; and God can propose, at least foresee no end of his works, because it is always in our power to defeat his designs.

The foundation of such objections as the author makes here, is owing, I suppose, to the confused abstract notions that are commonly framed of the merit or desert of virtue; whereas, if it were considered, that all rewards of this kind are comparatively merited, and, as I shall show afterward, are always relative to society, the mistake would soon appear. For instance: in a society, where one man is better than all the rest, we say, This man better deserves an estate, which he gets, than any other: But place him again in a society, where all these are better than he, it cannot be said he deserves the same estate, though he be still the same man. In short, all the reward due to virtue, if it can properly be called one, is a reward of a kind with itself, improvement in it; and all that can be expected of an infinitely wise and good being in the management of the moral world, is not providently to annex a positive reward to every virtuous action, but to observe such

measures as will, upon the whole, produce the most virtue and goodness, and the most happiness in consequence of it : which most certainly he does, however we, his short-sighted creatures, may be difficulted to reconcile this his design with some particular instances, and may wish things otherwise than we see them.

And therefore, from all this I think you justly infer the weakness of the common argument for a future state, taken from the perverted order of things here, and say, “ That it rather proveth the contrary ; for if things are wrong in this state, it is a shrewd presumption they must be always so.” To which it is answered, “ The present distempered state of the moral world is too manifest to be denied or dissimbled,” *etc.* I have already shown the absurdity of such a perfect world as he would have, and so answered this. But as a more direct answer he says, “ The insinuation, that if things were wrong here, they should always be so, is equal an to absolute affirmation, without any condition, they are so undeniably wrong*.”

* P. 18.

He means, I suppose, that they have gone so much, and so long wrong, as that we have no reason to expect a rectification. Now, to put an end, if possible, to this long pretended argument in favours of a future state, I observe, that when it is alleged by those of his principles that things are wrong here, or, which is the same thing, the means of private happiness unequally distributed, they must either mean that they are so absolutely, and without any condition, and that it had been better that good men had been often in ill men's place with respect to these things; or else they mean nothing at all. For if they say, that indeed, all things considered, it was more wisely ordered by providence, that good men should be liable to afflictions, and that in the end it would serve a good purpose, to wit, their advantage, the cause is given up; for then things are best as they are, and they could not have been otherwise, consistently with wisdom and goodness; and consequently it is wise and fit, as he himself says, that we should be innocently oppressed, massacred, *etc.* But this the author

will not grant, for he every where asserts, that vice and its consequences are introduced contrary to God's design, and are absolutely wrong and cannot serve a good end ; and yet he has still a reason in reserve why things should be allowed to go on for some time. He tells us, page 42. " If God interposed extraordinarily to impede the external action, there would be no settled course in nature ; or is it reasonable to desire God to disturb the law of creation, rather than that we should do what is in our power to do ?" I would ask again, what suppose he did ? Is there any danger in putting a stop too soon, or too effectually to what is absolutely evil or wrong, especially since this interposition, according to him, must be sooner or later ? But then, " There would be no settled course in nature." It seems then the allowing moral evil is necessary to a regular settled course : but, according to him, vice is an unnatural interruption of the settled regular consequences of virtue to others, and introduced contrary to God's design, and that is the most regular, settled, harmonious state of things in which virtue alone was to take place.

It cannot therefore on this supposition be urged that the law of creation would be disturbed. Besides, the disturbing general laws, being no reason of acting or not acting in itself, the only reason for not disturbing this settled order would be, that some greater moral evil would follow upon doing so, than not doing it; for general laws are only to be kept or broke as the keeping or breaking them answers some morally good or ill end. Now the only consequences of such extraordinary interpositions, and of giving dreadful and early examples of vice, would be the more effectual discouragement of vice; and according to him, the more effectual, the better: and if he would condescend on any ill consequences this would have, as indeed they are innumerable, he will find that he answers himself: so that it is absurd to talk as he does * of “ Limiting agents to a certain time for doing ill,” if vice be absolute ill; for to say this, is to say it would be better general laws were broke, than vice were permitted. But he will insist that such interpositions would

* P. 49.

destroy a free choice, and so would be inconsistent with a state of probation *. But if this were a destroying our liberty, yet better to do so than leave us with such a power, when, by virtue of it, we chuse and do what is absolutely ill. Why trust us with so dangerous a power when we would only bring misery on ourselves by it? Better drive one to do what is materially good against his will, than let him do what is absolutely evil with it; otherwise what serves laws and their penalties for? At this rate no society should punish malefactors, because in so doing they destroy a free choice in others. But he tells us †, “ Though God would impede the external action, he cannot impede the wicked design itself, which is already the wickedness and obliquity from the rule of action.” But what then? Let him that should, suffer for it. But because he is wicked, should another, that is not so, suffer for his wickedness, if it be absolutely unfit he should do so? Is not this then a demonstration, that the permitting it answers some good end with respect to others,

* P. 42.

† The same page, 42.

since, after all, the evil of the action is already committed, to wit, the design, that part of it (the material part) is still allowed to follow, for which the person is neither more or less guilty, and by which others also suffer? For why permit it, when this permission answers no good end? If it does, such as brightening the virtue of the sufferer, or the like, then here is a good reason not only for permitting but decreeing moral evil; and so we have a good reason for God's decreeing all the ill ever happened.

You have good reason, therefore, I think to say, that upon this scheme only, in which every thing is as right as can be, a future state can be built. The immortality of the soul is what I both sincerely wish and believe, and I dare say, it is the wish of every one not exceedingly lost to goodness; and that even the most atheistical person, in the midst of all his attempts to prove it false, wishes a confutation; and therefor, I think the author ought to have been more sparing in the reflections he makes upon you, and in effect upon all that are of your principles, as deciding so overbearingly

in this sum and chief of all enquiries, and building it upon an idle and inconsistent fancy of your own, in opposition to a proof agreeable to the sense of all mankind. I am still of opinion, that upon this scheme only it can be built, and more consistency, than upon one that arraigns the goodness of God, by maintaining things to be absolutely wrong, and so in effect destroys the foundation of all hope. For, though indeed that senseless argument, that things will sometimes be set right, because they are here evidently wrong, be cut off*;

* It is true indeed, things will be so far rectified, as that the virtuous and knowing will be placed in stations suitable to their capacities and virtue, as their future improvement and happiness will admit, and as the laws of that society require, which is the natural and only proper reward of virtue. For it is absurd to suppose, that virtue should always want its natural reward. It may indeed do so for a time, when it is best it should be so, when this tends the more to brighten it and render it happier at the last. But if virtue were always to be miserable, there would be no accounting for things; this would be always using the means, when yet the end were never to follow. But that virtue will ever be the road to happiness, and lead to it sooner or later, and in such a time and way as will answer the best and wisest ends, as we see it sometimes happens here, is as evident as the goodness of God. This is such a rectification of the constitution of the world as will always be going on, if it can be called a rectification; for I have no de-

yet the argument, drawn from virtue's wanting its natural reward, is great and unanswerable. The natural rewards of virtue are here but often felt in part, sometimes scarce at all, in the case of a sudden death in the pursuit of it, which no account can be given of, without supposing another world; for here would be a means evidently designed for bringing about such an end, and which is ever designed by God for bringing it about, (whatever good ends it may over and above serve with respect to society) and yet the end not follow. Again, as this is but a part of the whole scheme, and evidently broken and incomplete, and as it is plain, we are sent here for improving in knowledge and goodness, when we are so far advanced in this, and consequently when the reason for our continuance in being, to wit, our capacity of doing always more and more good, is always growing stronger and stronger, to be dashed into nothing all at once, is absolutely inconsistent with all the notions we have of wisdom and goodness; and conclusions, fire to quarrel about the word, providing it be not made to include the supposition of things being once absolutely wrong.

drawn from the goodness of God, are as certain as any drawn from his natural perfections, nay more certain, as we have clearer notions of it. Again, there is no ultimate end here; every thing answers some end, that another, and that another, and so on, which plainly leads us beyond this world; and as he himself very well expresses it, “the relation of things stretch out into eternity,” and that without having recourse to an unnatural interruption of the scheme, in order to have virtue rewarded, and vice punished. The actings of infinite wisdom and goodness are always uniform and consistent. And this lays a beautiful foundation not only for another state, but for the eternity of it; which the other scheme does not. For if the virtuous meet with as much happiness there as they wanted here, as the reward of their virtue; and the vicious as much pain, it infers no more, and a future state upon it may end: so at this rate a *millennium* may do all the business. But this argument I shall endeavour, upon another opportunity, to propose in its full force, where particularly I shall show, that moral reasons are what alone must

determine this point, they being ever the rule of God's acting, and that too much regard has been had to the natural ones, both by the friends and enemies of this doctrine.

2dly. What we proposed further under this head, as necessary to reconcile the admission of vice with the goodness of God, and happiness of the creation, was, that this is a state of discipline, in which we get experience by the punishments annexed to our mistakes and vices, or in which we are punished only for our future reformation and amendment.

That at our birth, we enter into the great school and nursery of the creation, in which, as our reason opens, we improve by a gradual acquaintance with men and things, in knowledge, virtue, and a capacity for happiness; and as we mistake, are wisely and kindly punished, in order to our future good, and a more regular pursuit of our happiness: and that this state of discipline will be carried on without end, by our translation to another and happier society, is, I think, the most delightful truth in all philosophy.

That childhood is a state of discipline, and a state of discipline only; and that it would be

cruel to punish children with any other view, than in order to their future good, and the correcting of their faults, and the determining them to a more careful pursuit of the rules of virtue and happiness, is seen and acknowledged by all. But, as if when we advance in years, we became new creatures, and get new powers and faculties, it is alleged we then come to be in a state of probation too, though how, or at what precise time this state begins, is not said; and that what faults we commit then, we deserve to be positively punished for hereafter, or punished without any such view; though it is plain, the mistakes we fall into then are owing to the same causes these of childhood are, weakness of reason, or strength of passion, and are equally predetermined by God. To this purpose are the many objections made by the author of *Reflections*, against our being here in a state of discipline only.

He tells us*, “From this scheme it would follow, that man would never fall into the same vice again:—for ignorance is made

* P. 5.

the reason why they fall into vice ; and it is affirmed, every new experience will teach them how to act in such cases afterward." And afterwards *, " This is an age wherein the theory of morality, at least, is perfectly understood ; therefore, according to this doctrine, it should be most virtuous." But how does this follow ? Because one is sensible for the present of the evil of vice, by feeling its consequences, and made to repent his choice, must he therefore be ever after so ? If indeed all circumstances were the same, if he had as fresh a sense and remembrance of his folly, and no stronger temptation to vice the second time that he had the first, it would be impossible to fall again into vice. But though the theory of morality should be never so well understood, yet sure he will not say, every man skilled in this theory knows and confesses, upon every solicitation of private passion, that it is best for him, at the time, in all respects, not to gratify that passion. These are quite different things. Will he, or any man say, a man that drinks

* P. 6.

drunk, to use his own instance, which one skilled in the theory of morality may do, thinks drinking, in all respects, worse at the time than not drinking? As we are imperfect creatures, we must be more affected with present things than future; and whatever applies itself most strongly for the present to the passion, that uppermost carries it; our former sense of things also wears off, and our circumstances vary, and thence it is we fall again into vice. This is the necessary effect of our imperfect finite natures and constitutions; and hence a repetition of experiences becomes necessary.

But still it will be urged, if this be a state of discipline only, how shall we account for men's contracting habits of vice? This seems to be an intire defeating the end of annexing punishment to vice, when instead of being reformed, and made wiser by it, we contract habits that we go out of the world hardened in, as this author reasons*. "Doth not drunkenness carry its own punishment along with it; yet of what do we contract stronger or more

* P. 5 and 10.

incorrigible habits*?" This, it must be owned, is the most plausible objection urged against this scheme; and therefor I answer, *1st*, that we can contract no directly ill dispositions, as I have already shown; and therefor, the most any man can do, is only to strengthen his selfish ones, (which are not ill of themselves, but only accidentally so) to the bearing down, in a great measure, his virtuous ones; but no man, no not the most vicious that ever lived, is altogether void of virtue. *2^{dly}*, That every man, both the most ignorant, and the most vicious, improve much more, both in knowlege and goodness, than is commonly imagined. I may venture to say, there is not so great a difference betwixt the most acute philosopher, and a countryman of common sense, as betwixt the same person when a child, and when a man. Nor can it be otherwise; for God has so closely twisted our concerns and interests in this world, as that every man, that is not an idiot, must grow in acquaintance both with men and things, especially the common maxims of morality, and

*. P. 6.

benevolence, either to a larger, or more confined system, according to his circumstances. *3dly*, There is this remarkable difference betwixt habits of virtue and vice, that the first are attended with a growing pleasure, the other, the more indulged, afford continually less and less. The organ becomes more and more blunt, and at length a complete cure is brought about by its destruction: (whereas, habits of knowledge and goodness have no dependence upon the body :) though in the mean time vicious habits, and a continuance in them for some time, must happen, in consequence of that variety of constitutions and circumstances, that, as I shewed before, the good of the whole requires.

But after all, if there be any difficulty in accounting for the growth of vicious habits, the other scheme is as much obliged to answer for it as this: for whatever punishment any act of vice may deserve after it is committed, yet sure none will be so cruel or unreasonable as to say, that a vicious man can do any thing to deserve so dreadful a curse, as that his recovery should always grow more and more difficult, and inclination to vice stronger and stronger; for this

is a matter that justice, even in their own misapplied sense of the word, has nothing to do with. The systematic writers indeed say, "It is judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, or a withdrawing of the spirit." But I scarce think our author will go so far.

Another objection he starts is, how such a state of discipline can be carried on in the other world? "Shall we," says he*, "be in hazard of acting fraudulently, oppressively, *etc.* there, in case we have not got knowledge and experiences enough of these things here? or shall we be vicious to eternity,—that we may still—be improving in virtue and knowledge, from our vices, or from the punishment they bring along with them?" And afterwards†, "Men that have sinned lustily, as Caligula, Nero, *etc.* bid fair to be the brightest spirits." And again‡, "These", to wit, dreadful monsters of men, "should be the best men, having had most experience." But who does not see, that all this is founded on a miserable mistake of this scheme, as if it fol-

* P. 7.

† P. 8.

‡ P. 5.

lowed from it, that the being deterred from vice, by feeling the consequence of it, was positive improvement in virtue and knowledge, and therefor the more experiences of this kind the better : whereas it is plain, that the consequences of vice being only to fright us from making any more experiments of it, and to set us upon a right course, the person who falls again and again into vice, is never the better for having formerly felt its effects, no more than a child is better for falling again into the same fault, after having been before chastised for it, whom yet none will deny to be punished again only for his amendment. The end of punishing being only to deter from vice ; the sooner this end is overtaken, the better for the person : though indeed the present constitution of things will not allow that men should be made so perfect, as never to need correction. And it can never follow, as he insinuates, that because the design of punishment is to make us wiser and better, by teaching us to reform and amend ; therefor we are made so, though we are not reformed by it, but fall again and again into the same fault. From this then it appears,

how absurd it is to talk of dealing fraudulent-ly, oppressively, *etc.* in heaven in order to improvement; for still the more improved, the more happy we are, and the less liable to act so, and so the less occasion for punishment, though we can never be absolutely perfect, or altogether free from error and mistakes.

Again *, he endeavours to show, that on your principles there can be no ground for the complaint you make, " That the greatest confusions, and bloodiest massacres, have arisen from certain opinions." " For," says he, " if there is no real evil in the world, nothing but what is consistent with the good and improvement of mankind, and what God designed, it will follow, that it is perfectly needless to seek to alter the opinions of other men——and that no former opinions can have an ill consequence, or new ones a better, every thing taking that issue that God designed it should." That every thing happens for the best, and takes that issue God designed, I have already shown; but does it follow from this, that it

* P. 12.

is needless to seek to alter the opinions of men? For God may design that too; and if he does so, he must also design the means of it.

This is what has been urged over and over again, by every one that has but in the least dipped into the predestinarian controversy; and therefor, when he says*, “that the doing so is fighting against the Creator, and opposing his designs, and making him design all the contrariety among men that ever was or will be;” he may as well say, that the taking medicines to mend a diseased constitution, or to cure a distemper that one has fallen into through no mismanagement of his own, (and this, at least, I hope, the author will own to be designed by God, as being the effect of natural laws, established by him,) is fighting against him, and making him design contrarieties. The case is the same in the moral world as in the natural, they both alike need this kind of mending. It is true indeed, from our partial and limited view of things, we do not know what is best in the whole in many cases, till the event discover it,

* In the following 13th page.

at least not with certainty; and therefor, we will always desire, and do what appears best to us; and if we be virtuous, what we think will do the greatest good, though God may see fit, for wise ends, to disappoint our wishes and endeavours, which abundantly solves all the contradiction he loads you with. One may innocently point out any past evil, which God saw fit should happen, in order to prevent the like in time coming, and yet God may not see fit to grant this wish; unless he say, that to prevent this contrariety, God should grant every particular wish of every good man that is made with an honest intention, which is both impossible and absurd; because, by reason of his imperfect knowlege, he must frequently desire things not good in the whole.

He objects next *, that this scheme takes away the force of all laws, both human and divine. “How comes human laws,” says he, “to inflict punishments — for men’s improving themselves in virtue and knowlege, *etc*?” Certainly the author could not be ig-

* P. 14, 15.

norant, that the reformation of offenders can, upon this scheme, only be brought about by punishment, and that this is the end you always assert punishment serves. Not as I observed before, that feeling the effects of vice is positive improvement in virtue or knowledge, which he always insinuates; but only designed to deter us from vice. All therefor he says here is besides the purpose. “ But,” says he, “ when a rogue is hanged, all his future advancement in perfection is uncharitably cut off, at least here.” Very true, but not hereafter. And by this, both he and the society are most evidently benefited; the society, in that a bad member is cut off; and he himself, in that when his selfish passions are now come to such an height, as in a great measure to extinguish his virtuous ones, and to make both himself and others for ever uneasy while he is joined in society with them; he is by death set free, both from the organs and objects by which such passions are gratified: so that this man’s reformation is brought about by punishment. And herein appears the great goodness and wisdom of the end God makes all punishment to serve,

in that whatever other views society may have in punishing, he ever punishes with a view to reform, and makes even the punishment inflicted by society on malefactors serve this end.

His next objection is *, “ That there is another thing assumed as certain in this scheme, which yet seems contrary to observation and experience in this life, namely, that misery or punishment is the natural consequence of all vices in it ;” (though in the foregoing he had said, it inferred remiss impunity ;) “ which,” he tells us, “ is not true, and so far as it is not, it takes away the very foundation of this state of discipline.” And he says, “ It is so far from being true, that some men, secure by their ill got power, rather triumph in their villainy—as they enjoy health, ease, affluence, *etc.*” That all vice is always followed by one kind of punishment, the bearing down the virtuous affections, and for the most part with more, to wit, positive pain and misery, is very certain ; but that the same vice is always followed with the same degree of conse-

* P. 16.

quent misery or punishment in different persons, and at the same distance of time, this scheme never said. And it is sufficient for all the ends of God's government, that this punishment shall be at such a time, and in such measure, as he shall see best to answer the ends of punishment, the good of society, and reformation of the offender. And to proportion these aright, is only the province of him that is infinitely wise. When God has some great revolution to bring about in the world, suppose the humbling one grand villain, as he calls him, or destroying a wicked nation, by allowing another grand villain to reign so long in unbridled power and tyranny, and, if he pleases, in dealing death and destruction around him, will any man say, this last is never to feel the effects of his vice, because he does not feel them sooner than the end he was sent into the world for be accomplished; and that therefore the whole of his duration (not this life only, which he without ground insinuates this scheme restricts it to.) is not a state of discipline? In this world, the time of punishing the malefactors is not always the same after the fact.

Q

Again, of two men that equally love drinking, the one has a constitution that feels not half the consequent disorder after drinking the same quantity as that of the other does. This then, I hope, shows, that such inequalities are as little to be accounted for upon his scheme as this: for, why is the same vice punished so differently here? or, why are not both persons alike reserved for positive punishment hereafter? As for the virtuous bearing the pains due to the vicious, if this be not for their good and improvement, let him tell what it is for, since their virtue would have been the same, and the same positive reward (supposing such upon his scheme) due to them, whether they had suffered or not. I proceed now,

In the last place, to show, that as this world is a state of discipline only, so this state will be carried on in another world, and that punishment can only serve the same end there that it does here. The great drift of all our author's reasoning is to prove, that this is a state of probation, in opposition to its being a state of discipline only; and in this, it must be owned, he has the generality on his side. From

which he infers *, “ That reason surely concludes, that the punishments in an after-state must be positive.” And again †, He calls justice a necessary perfection. I shall therefore take this opportunity of delivering a few thoughts, with as much distinctness as I can, on a subject of this importance; which I the more readily do, because though it has of late been hinted at, in general, by some, yet it has never, as far as I know, been pursued its full length.

There are no words more frequently used by men in conversation and writing, than justice and injustice, right and wrong, merit, desert, satisfaction, guilt, and the like, nor, as they themselves think, with more propriety and clear ideas; and yet I may venture to affirm, there are very little understood, or spoke with a more confused meaning. The reason of this I take to be, they see certain punishments annexed here, by wise lawgivers, to certain crimes, and in many cases can discover the reason and necessity of these, for the good and

* P. 50.

† P. 48.

preservation of society. But then, not attending to, or not keeping in mind, the true reason of this, and finding, at the same time, their aversion always rise at the remembering such enormities, they thence come to think the same punishment should always follow the same crimes, without regard to time, place, or the circumstances of a society; and their own humour or passion, however variable it may be, yet it is always made for the present the only just and certain standard of punishing, and even of God's punishing. Thus, how often, upon pardoning such offences as the law makes criminal, do some cry out of injustice, though the good of society as plainly requires this in some cases, as, for ordinary, it does the contrary? And the same way are men apt to judge of the actings of the supreme governor of the world. They observe some go out of this world unpunished, and that very often for such crimes as indeed exceed the measure of common ones; and thence hastily conclude the same punishment they should have met with here, or far greater, will certainly find them there, without ever considering what end it can serve, or

whether or not these persons be placed in society, where rewards and punishments can only be of use, and the most part, in the heat of their zeal, extend these to eternity. And this I take to be one reason, that wild enthusiasts, and men of hot imaginations and wrathful tempers, are more ready to damn one another than persons of cooler heads and kinder tempers. They are ever representing the faults of others, especially injuries done themselves, in such a light, as no punishments are sufficient, as they think, to expiate. Now, the absurdity of all this would soon appear, if such would but allow themselves to consider, that the words just, unjust, desert, *etc.* are necessarily relative to society, and that it is nonsense to use them but with respect to men placed in a society. One living by himself, who should drink drunk, or otherwise abuse his body, or the faculties of his mind, would do an injury to himself, but could not be said to do an unjust thing; because in this case, these actions have neither a good nor ill influence upon others; and it might be wise and good to punish such an one, for his own sake and future happiness; but it

would be no act of justice. But once place this man in society, he is justly punishable for the same actions from quite other reasons, to wit, the good and preservation of society, and the discouraging others, which is ever the end and rule of punishment in a society; and differently for the same crime in different societies, according as their different interests require.

First, Hence then appears the absurdity of thinking justice is an attribute of God distinct from wisdom and goodness. Justice being ever relative to society, as I have shown, it is plain it can argue no disposition distinct from goodness, and far less any that is inconsistent with it, or contrary to it, as is commonly imagined, but it is only that particular instance of goodness in conjunction with wisdom, that is exerted towards persons connected with one another in a society; and to do every one justice, or to give every one his due or merit, is only to dispense the rewards and punishments of the society in such a manner, as is proportionable to the inclination and capacity of its several members to advance or act contrary to its interests;

or, in a word, to encourage virtue, and discourage vice.

So that justice is the same to society, or the body politic, that a wise and prudent paternal love is to a child, to wit, the use of the properest ways to bring about its happiness by rewards and punishments. And if justice argue no distinct disposition from goodness in God, far less can it signify any thing like resentment in him, (the worst kind of which is called justice in God by a great many,) because we can do him no personal injury by our vices; and yet the only possible way of defending the common notion of God's justice is, by representing him as a being liable to passion, wrath, and resentment, and wanting personal satisfaction for sin. Upon this supposition therefor, and this only, they go right to work, who say, that the merits of another has screened some from wrath and vengeance; while he has left by an act of his sovereign will the most part of the world to perish, when he could just as easily have saved all as one. For however confused, inconsistent, or absurd notions such may maintain of guilt, merit, justice and mercy,

yet as it never comes into their head that these have any relation to society, but that God, as a wrathful, furious, revengeful being, who resents vice as a personal injury, and whose resentment must vent itself some way or other, though upon the innocent in place of the guilty, is prevailed upon by the importunity and sufferings of another, to pass an act of pardon for a few, which otherwise he was not inclinable to; still it must be owned, they are so far consistent with themselves

2dly, Hence likewise appears the absurdity of the doctrine of positive punishments in a future state. And that I may not be mistaken, nor fight about words;—by positive punishments I mean such as are inflicted merely for what is past, without any view to what is to come, which is the common notion of them, and this author's in particular, as is plain, from his expecting redress in another world for suffering in this *, and from his contending for punishment; when yet he asserts †, what is indeed commonly asserted, “ That there is no sin

* P. 15.

† P. 7.

there: for if there can be no vice there, punishment can never be inflicted to prevent it; and therefore it must be merely positive, or inflicted only for what is past." Now if, as I have shown, the only wise and good end punishment can serve, is the preventing vice for the future, and the only end for which it is inflicted by society; and if, as I have likewise shown, there be no disposition in God prompting him to inflict it, with any other view, it is plain, that the inflicting it merely for what is past, as it would be altogether useless, and consequently cruel, so it must be absurd. And here let it be observed, that if what is commonly called guilt, or a liability to punishment merely for past acts of vice, be the consequence of any act of it, it must be so of every act of every man, and all must suffer there, since all are more or less guilty. I have already shown, that there is no evil disposition in nature; that vice is only owing to the weakness of our reason, or the strength of our selfish affections, or partial benevolent ones; and that none of these are ill, considered in themselves, but are only so accidentally with respect to others, as they suffer

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by them ; for these dispositions, considered as existing without such ill effects, suggest nothing horrible to us ; and yet if one have the disposition, he is equal vicious, whether he show it by external action or not. If then no selfish affection be absolutely ill in itself, there can be no evil in having the greatest degree of such an affection more than the least ; and therefor no degree of them, even the highest, is positively punishable more than the least : for if any be so, all must be so, since they differ not in nature, but only in degree. I say, positively punishable ; for to punish in order to prevent these ill effects for the future, and reform the offender, and make him more capable of the advantages of society, is both wise and just, and is the very way this state of discipline I am pleading for is carried on. No reason therefor can be given, for punishing one man and freeing another. If it be said, repentance makes this difference ; then here again the good of society, and not the guilt, is made the rule of punishing ; for, what makes it unfit to punish a penitent is, that whereas before he was an ill member of society, he is now, by his change

of mind, a good and useful one: but if punishment be inflicted merely for what is past, one is equally liable to it, whether he repent or not.

But here, perhaps, our author will be ready to cry out, if none is to be punished only for what is past, then it seems we are to expect no redress for being innocently oppressed, massacred; and oppressors are not accountable *. I ask, what redress a generous mind would expect, but the prevention of the like for the future, and the reformation of the offender, (which I have already shown, all punishment, even that inflicted by a society in its own defence, is wisely over-ruled by God to tend ultimately to,) and his being brought to a sense of the ill he has done? not a sense of his having acted contrary to God's design, or of having done what is absolutely ill in the whole; but of his own sinister and selfish designs in what he did, though it was wisely designed and over-ruled by God, which is foundation enough for repentance and remorse. Or does he mean

* P. 15.

by *redrefs*, revenge, and that oppressors should be treated the same way they have treated others? This is a redrefs unbecoming any good man, and far more God; and yet this is the only sense his words will bear, since no other kind of redrefs can be hereafter expected from them. As for that other instance adduced by our author, to prove and illustrate the justice and reasonableness of positive punishments*, to wit, “The justice of a great man’s sending off an inferior with marks of anger, for abusing his favour, and kind designs of raising him;” an instance commonly used by those of his way: I answer, that indeed there is no doubt but such a thing would be just and right; but still for this reason, that it would be the properest way of discouraging such practices in others, and particularly in the man himself. But if such a benefactor had the power of creating this man, and foresaw, and, for wise ends, decreed, that he should act so upon such treatment, and yet, notwithstanding this, should punish him for any other reasons than these I mentioned, I need not say what name such a conduct would deserve.

* P. 46.

What I have said likewise shows, how far we can be properly said to be accountable to God. God has implanted in every man a principle of self-preservation; and that one man should punish another for an injury, is as natural as is the principle from which such a punishment proceeds. But this right that every man has in a state of nature, being made over by him, for wise ends, to the magistrate; the magistrate, in punishing, acts in the name, and by the appointment of the society, in the defence of the society, that thus redress its injuries; and it is the society that properly punishes. Accountableness then to them is a lability to a punishment that they inflict in their own defence, and for their future good and security against what hurts them. This then we see is a quite different thing from a merely positive punishment inflicted after by God, when it cannot at all serve this purpose, the future good of society; and therefore it must be absurd to say, we are accountable to God in this sense, if he punishes only for past acts of vice. So that there would be no parallel here betwixt God's punishments and those

of society. As this shows how we cannot be accountable to God in the same sense we are to society, or magistrates acting in their name; because we can do him no personal injury, as we do them, and because the prevention of vice for the future is not here supposed to be the end of punishment; and therefore it must be absurd and improper to justify positive punishments, by saying, we are accountable to God as we are to earthly lawgivers, since punishment would, in this case, be inflicted with such different views.

From what I have said of positive punishment, appears the absurdity of the doctrines of hell-torments, as commonly taught; for if there be no foundation for positive punishment, that is, punishment only for what is past, it is plain there can be no foundation for an eternity of such punishment; and yet it must be owned, if any reason at all can be given for such punishment, the same reason will hold for any degree, or any duration of it. And therefore I cannot but think it strange, to find the author of *Reflections, etc.* saying, in the note at the foot of P. 12. "That an older

ſcheme was for exorbitant pains :” ſince it is impoſſible to ſay, what pains are exorbitant upon his ſcheme, which neither fixes, nor can poſſibly fix, any ſtandard of future puniſhment, otherwiſe than by ſaying, “ it will be juſt and right ;” which, I have already ſhown, are words that, on his ſyſtem, have no meaning. Whether eternal puniſhments can be eſtabliſhed on any other foundation, ſhall be conſidered by and by.

Before I leave this ſubject I would have it obſerved, that that ſenſe in which I have ſhown poſitive puniſhments to be abſurd, is the only ſenſe in which I would maintain them to be ſo ; for if by poſitive puniſhments be meant ſuch as are inflicted by a ſociety for its own defence and preſervation, this is a notion I have nothing to quarrel at, unleſs perhaps the impropriety of a word, it being as natural and neceſſary for a ſociety, or a ſingle perſon, to defend themſelves, and reſent an injury, as for loſs of health to follow intemperance ; and I am ſo far from meaning this, that I ſhall immediately ſhow, that ſuch puniſhments, as they are good and wiſe in every ſociety, ſo they will

certainly take place in a future one, though the author of Reflections would fain confound these two widely different notions of positive punishment, and load this scheme with denying it in this last sense, as is evident from his way of arguing, in page 14.

The only thing now remaining to be considered is, whether we will be placed in society in another world ; and if we be, how far rewards and punishments will be required there ?

That the other world will be a society, is, I think, hardly denied or doubted by any reasonable man, and therefore needs the less proof.

And indeed it is plain of itself ; for as we are creatures plainly designed for improvements in knowledge and goodness, and as these can only be brought about by culture, teaching, and discipline, to which converse and intercourse with others is absolutely necessary ; for we can never know unless taught, nor improve in virtue and goodness, nor consequently in perfection and happiness, without opportunities be afforded us of contracting acquaintances and friendships, and without a foundation be laid for an intercourse of offices ; and as it is neces-

fary we should be placed in society here for that end, so it is plain we must be so hereafter. Besides, if it were otherwise, we would be placed so long in a state, which has no connection with that other, and consequently all our improvements here would be lost and useless, which is inconsistent with all the notions we have of infinite wisdom, that never does any thing in vain. It is plain then we will still be sociable creatures there, and have opportunities of expressing our love by mutual good offices; which therefor must be wanted in that world as well as in this.

And if there be a society, then it evidently follows, there must be both mistakes and imperfections there as well as here, and consequently punishments proportionable to these, and suitable to the nature of that state; and for the same reason: for a society without laws and sanctions is an absurdity; and unless there be wants, defects, mistakes, imperfections, and a subordination of creatures, (as it is evident there will, from men's being removed by death at all ages, and with such different capacities and degrees of improvement) there can be no

foundation for laws and sanctions. Whatever reasons there might otherwise be for our herding or assembling together, yet we could never be said to be joined in society. As particular capacities, inclinations, appetites, and particular ties and interests, and a subordination of creatures are, as I have shown, absolutely necessary here, for affording a foundation for society, for action, intercourse, improvement, and a plot, without which no rational creature could be happy, the same must take place hereafter, otherwise all ground of future improvement is cut off, and there could be no reason for placing us in society there. I do not mean we will have the same senses and objects of gratification we have here ; for these are lost at death ; but that there must be senses of some kind, both private and public, (for all happiness consists in the gratification either of our public or private senses, and to lose all sense, would be to lose both happiness and consciousness,) and particular interests built upon these, and particular sub-divisions of that society, connected by particular ties and interests, which must necessarily occasion vices, that is,

mistakes of one another, and our true interest. And is not this the ground upon which our inimitable poet Milton has built so beautiful a scene of action in heaven? Not that I would lay any stress upon a poetical fiction, any further than it shows the sense we naturally have how necessary imperfections and mistakes of one another, and our own happiness, and particular inclinations, tempers and parties, are for giving occasion to show and improve in the most heroic virtues, friendship, patience, and a contempt of danger.

From all this then it appears, that a future state will only be a continuation of this, or a state of discipline only carried on; in which, as our reason and experience grows, the less liable we shall be to mistakes and punishment, and the more engaged to virtue by the love of it; a state in which our happiness will always keep pace with our improvements, and in which they, whose improvement in knowledge and virtue has been in a great measure hindered by vicious pursuits and habits, must still be brought to by discipline; and what they fell behind here, so much the more trouble must they go

through hereafter, and so much the more imperfect must they be, and less fit to be sharers of the nobler privileges of that more perfect society. And as it will be wisely ordered, the discouragements to vice will be such as ever to make the offender in the end sensible of his folly, and sorry for it, to which, as I said, all punishment ultimately tends. And what greater punishment, or hell, or redress would one require, or what use would any other serve? We would think it hard if any more were required of us.

But when I speak of vice and punishment in another world, I would not be thought to mean, that this will be any diminution of the happiness of that state; but, on the contrary, the only foundation for its everlasting increase, which, on any other supposition, there is no room for. Nor would I be thought to mean, there will be such blunders and mistakes as we commit here, or that such slavish punishments will be necessary in consequence of them: for, as by vice, I mean that necessary imperfection of our natures that makes us mistake our true interest, so the more we improve, the less liable

to it will we be ; but as we can never be absolutely perfect, we can never be altogether so. It is an absurdity and contradiction, and every one, upon reflection, must see it, to say, that upon changing our state we can be made perfect all at once in knowledge and virtue ; for every finite being must be trained up in these by degrees, and by a constant progress ; and there is no difference betwixt vice and imperfection in knowledge and virtue, at least I mean no more by it. So long as we need improvement, so long we are imperfect, or, which is the same thing, vicious. But though this be so yet it would be absurd to infer from it, that we shall be in danger of acting fraudulently, oppressively, *etc.* in heaven, for we might as well argue from childhood to manhood, as from earth to heaven ; and that the one is not a state of discipline at all, because it is so perfect in respect of the other ; which yet, I think, none denies it is to good men. There is no doubt, but there is an almost infinite difference betwixt a Newton or a Clarke, and one but beginning the rudiments of mathematics or morality ; but it does not there-

for follow, that there are no degrees of knowledge or virtue beyond what they possessed, or that they will not feel the consequences (however inconsiderable they may be in respect of these of the other) of mistakes or imperfections.

I shall conclude this subject, with considering some other arguments usually urged in favours of eternal torments ; for, though perhaps the absurdity of positive punishments may be granted, yet it is thought, there are other reasons that lay a foundation for eternal misery. As, *1st*, It is alleged by some, that we contract habits of vice here, which we go out of this world hardened in, and that these remain equally violent in another world ; and that therefor, since we there want the objects of their gratification, we must of course be for ever miserable. But to this the answer is very easy ; for who does not see, that since all vicious habits depend entirely upon the body, they will be dropt with it at death. And in this appears evidently the necessity of death, and the great wisdom and goodness of our Creator in so ordering things, that whatever habits of vice we contract here, yet we can carry none

of these with us to the other world ; whereas our improvements in knowlege and habits of virtue, have, as I observed before, no dependence at all upon the body : even those vicious habits that are commonly thought to have the least dependence upon the body, pride, anger, envy, resentment, revenge, *etc.* are either owing to the strength of some selfish passion, or to a mistake of ourselves or others, as I shewed before, and so must either cease at death, or go off, as we improve in knowlege, goodness, and acquaintance with others. It is therefor absurd to say, as this author does*, “ That all the pleasure our nature would be capable of, after a life thus spent (to wit in vice) would be to be continued in an eternity of wallowing.” That the dead retain their old habits, does well enough indeed in a poetical or fabulous performance, but it is very indifferent philosophy ; for how can one have a desire either to debauchery or intemperance, when the very organ of sense itself is destroyed ? or how can he be any longer proud, or exceed in a good

* P. 48.

opinion of himself, when he comes to know the real worth of others as well as himself ?

2dly, It is asserted, that, if the end of all punishment be the good of society, and the prevention of vice for the future ; and, if the eternal punishment of some can most effectually answer this end, by deterring others, as it would appear it may, then it is good and just, according to the account we have before given of justice.—This is what is commonly, and with the best shew of argument urged in favours of this doctrine, and therefore I shall be the more careful to answer it.

And for that end, I observe, that every punishment should be proportionable to the vice, and that a society exceeds in punishment, when the pain an offender is made to suffer is so great, as to over-balance any advantage the society can propose to reap from the more effectual deterring of others by the inflicting it. My meaning is, that no punishment should be greater than is sufficient to deter any one, that duly considers his interest, from the vice for which it is inflicted, and which there is reason to think will be so ; and every punishment is

so far unjust, as it exceeds this measure. If this were not so, then death ought to be the punishment of every crime here, since the greater the punishment be, the more effectually must vice be discouraged: and by the same rule, if any one suffer eternally in a future state, all should do so, and the punishment should be as intense as possible, as well as long. Now it is evident, if any punishment can be excessive, eternal punishment must be so: for it is impossible, the most viciously inclined person, even in this world, that has his senses, or the least degree of reason, can need such examples of extreme everlasting misery to deter him from vice; and far less is it to be thought, that in a state so much more perfect than this, where we will be so much more improved in knowledge and virtue, and always improving more and more, eternal punishments will be needful for this end, when some instances of short temporary ones inflicted now and then, serve in most cases to deter men from vice here, and answer all the purposes of society. It is the greatest absurdity to think, that when we shall arrive at truer notions of our own interest,

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and be made more thoroughly sensible how much it lies on the side of virtue, that we will need more terrible examples of misery to deter us from vice.

Add to this, that it is absolutely impossible in the nature of things, but such sufferings must produce repentance in the sufferer, that is, make him sorry for what he has done, and resolve to amend it if he had opportunity ; and it must effectually spoil his being an example to others, if after this he were still to lie under the punishment : for, how can it be an example to others, to punish one that has no longer an inclination to do ill, and that repents his former choice ? If it be alleged, that this repentance is not a right one, proceeding from a change of temper, from a love to God and goodness, but only forced and extorted by the sense of present pain : I answer, it is true indeed, sufferings of themselves can never produce a change of temper. But this is nothing to the purpose in this case : for the question here is not about the nature of repentance, but the good of society ; and all repentance equally serves this end, from whatever spring it proceeds ; this is all the repentance either

does, or can possibly take place at first upon forsaking any vice ; and therefor it would be unreasonable to expect more ; for all repentance is at first no more than a sense of pain following the vice, overbalancing any pleasure the committing it is attended with, and forcing the person to what he has otherwise no inclination to ; and this is sufficient to answer all the ends of society, the prevention of vice for the future, and the setting the offender upon a right course, which, as every man has naturally good inclinations, he will afterwards pursue from choice. Besides, as there is no directly ill disposition, there is no man's temper that needs an entire specific change, nor, if it did, could sufferings produce it, but only the love of vice needs to be weakened ; and therefore, since such sufferings, if they were to be eternal, could not serve any good purpose with respect to the offender himself, nor be designed to do so, and yet would produce such a repentance, as would hinder his being an example to others, it is plain the inflicting them would be useless and cruel ; and therefor the supposition of them is absurd.

In short, all the end a wife and good being could propose in placing us in society, is our happiness and improvement in knowledge and goodness, which there is no foundation for, unless we be so placed ; and that the advantages of being so placed might over-balance any pain we might suffer for vice, more than we would have suffered, had we not been so placed. My meaning is, that when one suffers any punishment, or any degree of it, for the sake of the society of which he is a member, and to be an example to others, more than he would have done, had he not been placed in society ; yet still it was better for him to be so placed upon this condition, than not to be so at all. For, even upon the scheme of liberty, if God but foresaw that the end of one's being placed in society, (his improvement and happiness,) would not only be defeated, but that he would pursue such a course, as would make his being so placed upon the whole his greatest misery and misfortune ; it would be so inconsistent with all the notions we have of goodness to place him, since it would have been better, absolutely better, not to have done so. For of what would it be an example, but of the

greatest partiality and cruelty, to see one devoted to suffer more than is necessary, either to reclaim him, or for the preservation of society? But when, on the other hand; I see that these sufferings are no more than the good of society makes absolutely necessary, and at the same time, that they will in the end bring about the person's reformation, and that it is a sufficient discouragement from vice, that men be always made sensible, by its consequences, of the impossibility of being happy in the practice of it, which they will always be more and more, as they improve in knowledge and experience; when I see that not one will be lost to the end of their creation, but that all will be for ever going on in a gradual progress towards perfection and happiness; and when I consider at the same time, that the good of the entire system required such a particular character, and that the person should be placed in such a course of action; this reconciles me both to the scheme and punishment.

Lastly, The only remaining argument I know urged for everlasting punishment, is that taken from the New-Testament, where it is plainly

asserted. To which I answer, that the most orthodox divines allow, that the several expressions there made use of to denote the misery attending vice in another world, such as bad men's being driven from the presence of God, the worm that never dies, lakes of brimstone, a bottomless pit, everlasting, flaming, and unquenchable fire, utter darkness, smoke, chains, *etc.* are merely metaphorical, and must indeed be so, unless the most inconsistent things can be reconciled: and therefore I think I may safely conclude, that all the stress that can or ought to be laid on these is, that misery must be for ever the necessary consequence of vice, or that as long as there is vice, or as long as we are finite creatures, which will be for ever, there must be punishment, and that that way of representing the matter is calculated only for popular conceptions. And certainly this is as just and natural an explication of the word *everlasting*, as is that which they give of the words fire, darkness, worms, chains, *etc.* or of the emblems under which heaven is represented, feasting, marrying, *etc.* which are all short and temporary actions. But if, from

what I have said upon this subject, any shall still think fit to judge me no Christian, as the most part are taught to do all those that are not of those opinions they reckon Christianity, all I can do, is to assure such, that I am a sincere friend to Christianity, as taught in the gospel, and particularly in the doctrines of its founder, which are as different from those taught in schools and systems, as charity is from bigotry, and more a friend than those who have fathered such doctrines upon it, as are inconsistent both with itself, and with common sense.

I have given my thoughts with the more freedom upon this subject, because I find I am not singular in my opinion about it: for I am now glad to see so absurd and horrible a doctrine beginning to be given up by all men of sense; a doctrine that has so long been made the engine of enslaving men's minds, and of setting them upon destroying one another, and which alone has added weight to the most horrible spiritual impositions and anathema's. For the most impious and fanatic superstitions, the most bloody massacres, all the rogueries of priests, and all the persecutions and enmities

among religious sects that have been, or still are among the several divisions of Christians, have been founded upon this, that all who differed from them in principles, or practices, neither good nor ill of themselves, were God's enemies, reprobated, and doomed to that horrible place. Remove but this fear, you remove at once all contentions about articles of belief, and all that cruelty, rancour, and ill-will that weak, enthusiastic or designing men have inspired men with against one another. And how seldom has it been made use of to deter men from what is really vice, in respect of those other uses that have been made of it? I cannot therefore help wishing, with the good and ingenious Dr. Burnet, to see that doctrine as much abhorred and ridiculed as ever transubstantiation has been.

And let none think, that the exposing it is doing any harm to the cause of virtue, or a taking off any necessary restraint from vice: for since, as I have already shown, pain and misery must for ever be the certain and necessary

* Master of the Charter-House, and author of *The Theory of the Earth*, *De statu mortuorum*, and other ingenious pieces.

consequence of vice, under the government of an infinitely wise and good Being, this answers all the purposes of eternal torments, and shows how needless, as well as cruel, they would be. For it is just equivalent for the deterring men from vice, (which is the only end eternal torments can in reason be supposed to serve,) to be made sensible, that misery and repentance must eternally be the consequence of vice, and to see others eternally suffer for it. So that no encouragement to vice is given by this to any who allow themselves to reason, and study to be rightly informed of the consequences of their actions. And as for those that do not so, but are resolved at any rate to go on in a course of vice, neither this, nor any other account of matters, will be regarded by them. But sure I am, if ever such be brought to reason, and be reformed in this world, they will sooner be so by a reasonable hell, than by an unreasonable one. As for honest well-meaning persons, who need no such slavish motives, it would be a great relief to them to be freed from such fears, (for the best have such fears)

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by which they are all their lifetime subject to bondage.

If these hints can be any way useful to reconcile men to the government of the world, and their own station in it, or to increase their love to God and one another, I have my end.

I am,

Sir,

Yours, etc.

A
C A T E C H I S M
FOUNDED UPON
EXPERIENCE and REASON:
Collected by a
F A T H E R,
For the use of
His C H I L D R E N.

The THIRD EDITION, corrected.

To which is prefixed,
AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER to a *Friend*,
concerning *Natural Religion*.

W H E R E I N,
The *Morality* of the ANTIENTS and MODERNS
is briefly compared.

First printed in the Year, 1739.

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO a FRIEND,

Concerning NATURAL RELIGION.

AS religion, my friend! is of the greatest importance to all mankind, and as there are a great variety of religions in the world, every one of them pretending to be the true religion; nothing seemed to me so well worth my serious study as to enquire into the grounds of them; in order to see which, if any, of them was well founded. And as this enquiry has cost me very much pains, I have, in this Catechism, laid down, in the shortest and clearest manner I could, the result of my researches, for a guide to my Children, in case my tender constitution do not allow me the pleasure of talking over these things to them, when they may become of age for such instruction.

Something more full, in this way, I intended; if want of health, and of time from the

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immediate affairs of life, had not hindered me. But I am truly glad that I have such a FRIEND as you, who hath always prevented me with good offices; in whom I can perfectly confide for that virtuous and free education, which, perhaps, I may not have the opportunity myself to see my young ones trained up in.

I have, in this Catechism, purposely avoided saying any thing directly against any particular religion, for these reasons: because that would have given offence to those, into whose hands it might fall, of another way of thinking; and might have, probably, brought myself to unnecessary trouble. You know, my Friend, that the bare suspicion of my not believing the opinions in fashion in our country, hath already occasioned me sufficient trouble. And indeed, it is the very nature and genius of every particular religion, by laying the main stress of salvation on mere belief of their peculiarities, to wean their professors affections from all who are not of the same household of faith with themselves; to cause them to reject heretics; and to mark them, with infamy or other punishments, who cause divisions and offen-

ces, contrary to the doctrine which they have learned. While on the contrary, natural religion wholly consists in right, or loving, affections to God and mankind, and a suitable behaviour towards them, without regard either to people's belief or unbelief of any doctrines or opinions ; which being necessarily in proportion to their perceptions of the degrees of evidence for the truth of the opinions, are neither virtues nor crimes. And therefor, a due regard for the honour of God, and the good of mankind, would make every thinking and impartial man wish that natural religion alone was embraced by all men. Then would the great strife about the truth of particular revelations, which most nations, in all ages, pretend to, and the greatest contentions about the meaning of them, cease ; and that perfect peace and unity, which are the genuine effects of truth, and which we hope will at last prevail, cover the whole earth. But this is rather to be wished for, than expected soon. For truth, which hath the weaknesses, and what is worse, the prejudices of mankind, instilled into them by a formidable body of interested men, to

support the peculiarities of the particular established, or political religions in most countries, to overcome, must work its way, the only way left it in many nations, privately, and by slow degrees.

Thus the case stands; not for men's want of knowledge of the religion of nature, but because it is so intermixed with idle reveries and mysterious notions, strongly inculcated upon the people by their authorized guides, that few have time, opportunity, ability, or rather resolution enough to search into these dark opinions, established more by power than reason and truth.

No society can subsist, you know, my Friend, without the practice of natural religion or morality; and therefore, every particular religion must have the precepts of it intermixed with its own peculiarities. Hence the absolute necessity of natural religion must be allowed. But the clergy, whose wealth and power in every country depends on having some additional opinions believed, will always have something, right or wrong, to say in favour of them. Hence, "natural religion hath been said not to be

“ understood before their systems appeared ;
“ and though it hath been known, yet it is
“ insufficient to bring men to happiness with-
“ out some additional discoveries not in the
“ power of mankind by the mere light of their
“ reason to attain.” Now, though I deem it
not prudent to argue directly against any par-
ticular popular religion ; yet I thought it need-
ful to maintain the certainty and sufficien-
cy of what is common, in some degree, to
them all, morality, I mean, or the religion of
Nature ; which makes all particular religions
more or less perfect, as they partake of it. And,

Though it might be demonstrated, from
the nature and reason of the thing, that reli-
gion, which is of the highest concernment to
all, should admit of the clearest and strongest
evidence level to the capacities of all ; and also
from the perfections of God, its Author, the
common governour of mankind ; for where
there is no law, there can be no government,
no obedience, or transgression ; yet I choose
rather to appeal, with the maintainers of par-
ticular schemes, to experience. And it is most
evident from the writings which remain to us,

of Socrates's disciples, that morality or natural religion was as well understood above two thousand years ago, at least, as it is at this day; and the rules or precepts of it as clearly delivered by Xenophon, Plato, Cebes, Cicero, Epictetus, etc.; (a good summary of which you will find in Gataker's introductory discourse to the life of M. Antoninus,) as they can be by any at this time, notwithstanding all the helps we have. And what is more, it is confessed even by the favourers * of more modern systems and establishments, " That the antients, not the philosophers only, but the great and busy part of them, excelled us in all the virtues which adorn human life and render societies flourishing and happy." And there were good reasons for this, which the author referred to hath not given. For the antients taught, That in religion or morality, as well as in other sciences and works of genius, wherein they excelled us, men should follow Nature. For so generally known and

* See Mr England's Enquiry into the Morals of the Antients, which I send you with this Letter and Catechism.

deeply founded is natural religion, that in human nature itself are implanted the immediate motives to all virtuous and religious actions, as well as the obligations to them. For example, thus: a love or reverence for an over-ruling, invisible Power, with a desire of his protection and approbation, and a fear of his displeasure, are common and strong affections in * mankind in all ages and in all places; however different their outward manner of expressing them, which is no essential thing, hath been. So also have the love of our species or kind, with a desire of their love or esteem, and an aversion at their misery, and having their ill-will, been so universal affections as to make up what we call by the name of humanity, that is, the characteristic of human nature. And no less common is the desire of life, and aversion to the loss of it. Besides, and above, all these natural affections or desires exciting us to, and resting in their proper objects or ends, *viz.* in God,

* So very strong have these religious passions been in mankind, that the ambitious and designing part of men have, by applying to them, got the direction of the souls, bodies, and properties of their fellows, and subjected them to the greatest slavery.

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our neighbour, and ourselves, and in the exercise of which there is great pleasure; we have a determination, in our own nature, to perceive, and approve or disapprove of right or wrong, *i. e.* kind or unkind, affections both in ourselves and others, and their applications to their objects. This is that self-approving or condemning principle which mankind, tho' they may a little stifle, can never divest themselves of. So that it hath obtained the name ✓ of common sense, moral-sense, or conscience. And as our greatest pleasure or pain arises, by the appointment of the author of our nature, from this perception and judgment of our own right or wrong affections and their applications, this lays the strongest obligations upon us to attend to, and obey, the dictates of, this governing principle of all our actions, our conscience.

I cannot avoid observing, with regret, how contrary some modern teachers go to that excellent rule of the ancients, To follow Nature; for they teach, "That human nature is altogether corrupted, and therefor not to be followed, but crossed." Thus men have

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been taught to look upon one another, as naturally villainous, and that they can be regenerated only by a sound faith in certain opinions which lay a foundation for wealth and power to their teachers. Hence that trust and charity natural in mankind for one another hath been almost rooted out for the sake of an interested part. And how have the cheated laity been wickedly egged on to destroy one another, in support of the ambitious and mischievous designs of the clergy, to bind their chains faster upon them?

But the antients not only taught to follow Nature, but also gave all encouragements to the following her kind and beneficent movements. For men were not then as now rewarded or punished on account of mere belief, or opinion. Those men who imitated God, by shewing the strongest inclinations to promote the good of mankind, were ranked among the immortals; and all public honours, or marks of esteem were paid them both before and after their deaths; and *e contra*: which was a following Nature too, in rewarding and punishing. Good offices, done to the public,

met, what they merited, public returns of gratitude. And this could not fail to produce more heroic acts of virtue, (though it is absurd to expect a perfect practice from imperfect creatures, let their rules be ever so plain and obligatory *,) among the antient Greeks and Romans, than are to be seen in latter ages. The heroism, which meets great rewards in modern times, consists in a stout belief of, or rather a great zeal for, the fashionable or established religious opinions; however mysterious and incomprehensible they may be, or even absurd and contradictory, and always varying.

And indeed so uncertain and indeterminate are these sublime opinions which are in later times super-added, (with some positive rites and ceremonies which serve as marks of the parties who espouse them,) to the eternal, invariable religion of nature, that not one of these gentlemen, who for interest's sake defend them, can agree with another, which of them are essential to be believed, or which not: nay, every one of them are given up, by turns,

* *Morals of the Antients*, p. 4.

by some of their advocates, as not essential to their system; while they are, by turns, as strenuously maintained by others. How such discoveries, then, can promote human happiness I know not; but on the contrary, we see that they furnish continual fund of debate and contention; and thus destroy that mutual love, forbearance, and peace, which is the chief end of religion to promote among mankind. The most uncivilized nations now on earth, as the Hotentots, and native Americans, with their natural impressions of virtue, and of a Supreme Being, who will reward and punish them according to their works, without any formal teaching, far out-do us Europeans in this respect. For, as it could never enter into their heads, unless it should be put into them by interested teachers, that God will ever reward or punish them for mere belief or opinion, they live at perfect peace with every body, their country-men, or strangers, so as never to quarrel*. But we Europeans have not

* See the Strength and Weakness of Human Reason. Edition II. p. 148. etc. Which I cite as an unsuspected authority; being one of those who place religion in belief and speculative knowledge more than in practice.

thought it enough to quarrel and fight among ourselves about useless ceremonies and opinions, but have even, to get the direction of their religion, consciences and properties, carried this spirit to foreign countries. Nay, have outright destroyed millions of the innocent inhabitants of nations, formerly unknown to us, on pretence of their not believing as we do. And our clergy, who would thus have the direction of every body's faith, swear and subscribe to the belief of opinions, for the sake of preferment, and do frequently afterwards, when compelled by the force of truth, contradict them, or explain them quite away; as is evident, upon comparing the articles which they subscribe with the books they write: and what is most astonishingly insincere, subscribe again rather than lose preferment: which is of most fatal example to set at naught all common honesty. And again, in order to exalt their own factious political schemes of belief, they weaken the force of the religion of nature itself, which is the foundation of all other religions; by asserting, That its rules or precepts are not certain and obligatory; and thus

throw men loose from all obligations of religion who believe not in theirs. And while they act this destructive part, they judge of other people's honesty by their own *. Such, generally, are the men who bestow so high encomiums upon themselves †, and laugh at the morals of freethinkers ‡, who lay all the stress of their eternal welfare on *morals* only; and account them, with equal charity and politeness, as raving madmen and known liars; for no other reason than I can find, but because freethinkers do commonly expose the licentious writings of the clergy, who place the great stress of people's salvation in a strong belief of those opinions, upon which are established their claims to wealth, power and reverence. I say, such generally are the men; for I except some worthy, learned, and truly religious clergymen, who openly declare for morals, against idle speculative opinions and useless ceremonies, and for liberty against imposition. But such honest men, seldom, meet with pre-

* *Morals of the Antients*, p. 4. and other places, compared with p. 360.

† P. 358.

‡ P. 360.

ferment in the church; nay, the civil magistrate hath enough to do to protect them from the fury and persecution of their brethren. Thus while our clergy exclaim against the detestable principles of popery, they inconsistently retain the wickedest parts of it, *viz.* its persecuting spirit, and claims to dominion over the consciences of men.

Upon the whole, you see, my Friend, that natural religion is universal, and sufficient to bring mankind, if they were not led aside by false opinions, to happiness; which is the end that God designed it for, and which they all necessarily desire; and so greatly and justly to be preferred to all particular religions, which occasion infinite disputes and strife among men. But with respect to Christianity, I must say, that though I doubt nothing that there was an extraordinary person sent unto the Jews about seventeen hundred years ago, to restore to them, both by precept and example, the religion of Nature, which they had neglected for sacrifices, rites and ceremonies; yet it does not at all appear that that divine person ever intended, or commanded any of those things

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to be written concerning him which we have ; far less that any man's salvation should in the least depend upon believing on such traditions, suppose they could admit of certainty. And as the Christian religion is commonly placed now more in believing his history, than in practising his morals ; by which Christians are rendered exceedingly corrupt, and the more so by certain unintelligible creeds and directories pretended to be built upon these traditions, I would desire that natural religion purely should be first taught my children, which cannot fail to recommend itself to their understandings, preferable to all others, on account of its plainness, certainty, and usefulness.

I shall talk more fully to you on these matters which are the subject of this letter, at meeting. I am sorry that our distance gives us not more opportunity of conversing together ; but that, nor any thing else, can ever diminish towards you the sincere friendship and brotherly affection of

The AUTHOR.

October 10th,
1738.

Y 2

A
C A T E C H I S M
FOUNDED UPON
EXPERIENCE and REASON:
Collected by a
F A T H E R,
For the use of
His C H I L D R E N.

A

C A T E C H I S M.

Q U E S T I O N.

AMONG the great variety of religions, prevailing in the world, which occasions infinite disputes among the different sects, what is the *True Religion*?

A N S W E R.

That, which is common to all religions, is the true religion only, *viz.* the *morality* of them.

Q U E S T I O N.

What do you understand by morality?

A N S W E R.

Morality is a conformity to those unalterable obligations, which result from the nature of our own existence, and the necessary relations of life; whether to God as our Creator and Governor, or to mankind as our fellow-creature or neighbour.

QUESTION.

How comes it that morality is common to all religions ?

ANSWER.

Morality being founded in our nature, and the necessary relations of things, is universal as nature and its Author; and does always necessarily obtain, however disguised under various appearances, occasioned by the prejudices of mens different educations.

QUESTION.

What is it that lays the obligation upon us to act according to Nature, or the rules of morality, which arise from it ?

ANSWER.

The Author of Nature, God himself, hath made our acting according to Nature, or the rules of morality, the only way to true happiness, which we all necessarily desire; so that no man, or society of men, can be happy, but in proportion as they obey the rules of morality, or the dictates of unprejudiced nature.

QUESTION.

How doth it appear that there is a God ?

ANSWER.

The ideas of order, administration, and a God, naturally spring up in the mind of man, as his understanding opens; and all God's works proclaim his being; their passiveness and dependence infer his self-existence and independence; their beauty, order and happiness prove his goodness, wisdom and power.

QUESTION.

What is God?

ANSWER.

God is an absolutely perfect Being who made and governs the universe.

QUESTION.

Are there more Gods than one?

ANSWER.

ONE God is necessary, and one is sufficient; which sufficiency of one destroys the necessity of more.

QUESTION.

What are the duties which arise from the nature of our own existence, and the relation we stand in to God?

ANSWER.

To God, our Creator and Preserver, our

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highest love and gratitude is due, with entire submission to his will in the course of his providence and absolute trust therein; as we know that a perfectly good Being, who can have no opposite interest to the happiness of his creatures, orders all things for the good of the whole; however, some things may have another appearance to us, who see but a very small part of the perfect universal system; for partial views must occasion imperfect appearances of that which is altogether perfect.

QUESTION.

How is God to be worshiped?

ANSWER.

God is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth, with internal sincerity, not external shew; for God sees and knows the heart, and pure religion towards him is altogether an internal personal thing, as described in the last question.

QUESTION.

What are the duties which arise from the nature of our own existence, and the relations we stand in to our neighbours?

A N S W E R.

We are to love our *neighbours* as ourselves. Or, in other words, we should do to others, in all case, as we would have them to do to us, upon a change of circumstances; which is the measure of both natural justice and charity, the great means of human happiness or public good; in all the various relations of life, whether superiors, inferiors, or equals.

Q U E S T I O N.

Does the love of God and our neighbours comprehend and make up all morality?

A N S W E R.

It does; and in it consists our own greatest good or happiness; for, besides the pleasure we have in the exercise of benevolence, gratitude, and the like kind affections, with the self-approbation arising upon our having acted according to them, the love of God and our neighbours encreaseth their mutual love and assistance to us; so short, plain, and agreeable, is natural religion, which makes our duty and interest the same.

Q U E S T I O N.

What is our duty to any who seem not to love God and their neighbours?

A N S W E R.

It is natural for mankind to love God and one another, if they have not conceived ill opinions of them; in such a case, we ought, therefor, to labour to undeceive them, by giving them a true or fair character of God; and shewing ourselves worthy of their love, by rendering them good for evil, in such a manner, as will not encourage them to continue in their prejudices.

Q U E S T I O N.

Why is morality also called natural religion?

A N S W E R.

Because it results from the nature of our existence, as before said, or is founded in our natural constitution; for by it we are necessarily disposed or inclined to love God and mankind; and our reason is implanted in us, to direct us to the means of promoting the glory of God, and the good of his creatures, which are the same; while our conscience naturally approves of this ultimate end of all our affec-

tions and actions, the general good, which involves the happiness of individuals; the perfection or happiness of a single nature, arising in proportion, as it contributes to that of the universe.

Q U E S T I O N.

What is required of us in subordination to the ultimate end of general good?

A N S W E R.

A regard to every one's self, in the temperate gratification of all his private appetites and desires, in consistence with one another.

Q U E S T I O N.

What makes this moderate and consistent gratification of our appetites and desires necessary?

A N S W E R.

Such sobriety and consistency in the gratifying of our appetites and desires, is necessary; because the intemperate and inconsistent gratification of any one of them tends to the destruction of the rest, and ruins the health of body and mind; and so renders us unfit for advancing our chief end, the general good, in

which our own greatest good or happiness is included.

QUESTION.

How is this to be prevented ?

ANSWER.

By keeping our chief good as much as possible at all times in our view, by attending close to the dictates of conscience, and by a vigorous use of our reason and judgment, in the conduct of all our desires to their proper ends, in subordination to our chief end ; by which method, we will acquire the habit of acting with prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude in all cases. And thus, all our desires being under the direction of conscience and reason, no disappointments from objects without our power will give us any uneasiness ; for honesty and contentment, if we will them, are always within our own power.

QUESTION.

What is sin ?

ANSWER.

Sin is a want of conformity to those unalterable obligations, which result from the na-

ture of our own existence, and the necessary relations of life.

QUESTION.

Whence ariseth sin?

ANSWER.

Sin ariseth from the necessary imperfection of our finite nature; a perfect creature being an impossibility and contradiction.

QUESTION.

What doth every sin deserve?

ANSWER.

Every sin is naturally, (*i. e.* by God's appointment) attended with proportionable misery or unhappiness.

QUESTION.

How is this to be remedied?

ANSWER.

By amendment and improvement only; for to excite or determine us to amend and improve, the pains affixed to vice are designed, such as the tomenting workings of hatred, anger, and the like unsocial passions, with the self-condemnation arising upon our having acted according to them, and also the punish-

ments of society which are founded upon self-defence.

Q U E S T I O N.

Is sin always attended with proportionable misery, and duty always attended with proportionable happiness?

A N S W E R.

Misery is naturally consequent upon, and connected with immorality, and happiness with morality; and every man feels it so, for the most part, even in this life, although some may stifle and disguise their feelings. But if in any case, or at any time, these consequences seem to be delayed, or the connection broken, as by death; this shews, that this state hath a connection with, and lengthens out into another state, where the same moral discipline, by rewards and punishments, for our reformation, or improvement in virtue or morality, will take place, to complete the great and good scheme, the final happiness of all creatures: for their perfect Creator and Preserver, who brought them into being, for that end of making them happy, wants neither good intention, infinite wisdom, nor power to

carry on and accomplish it; and therefor will complete what he hath begun. It is most inconsistent with all our notions of a perfect being, to think, that God, who does nothing in vain, and who hath given us a desire of, and capacity for happiness, will annihilate us, when these are so far increased, as to fit us for a happy life and state. Nay, it would be a contradiction to perfect benevolence, or goodness itself, to give us a desire and foretaste of happiness, only to disappoint us, and that after we are so far trained up in knowlege, virtue, and a capacity for it: this state, therefor, is but a nursery to the next more free and glorious field of improvement, in which our happiness will keep pace with our improvement in virtue for ever.

Q U E S T I O N.

How are we to behave to those, who happen to differ from us in religion?

A N S W E R.

As mens capacities and ways of education are very different, this must of necessity often happen; therefor, do to them as you would be done by, and give them no uneasiness upon

A a

that account; but offer your advice or instruction to them, if they please to hear you; and attend with patience, and without prejudice, to what they have to say for their religion; which, if it should appear to you, after a fair and thorough examination, to be a better, or more reasonable religion, (that is, if it tends more to the good of mankind, which is the test of all religions) than your own, embrace it; for to change opinion upon rational conviction, is a perfection in a finite being. On the other hand, to take religion upon any other authority, than that of reason and conscience, which is the voice of God within man, is Popery in any place, and a base slavish obedience to man, and rebellion against God the Lord of our conscience. But the worst part of Popery is, to give our neighbour any trouble upon the score of different belief; as many who take the name of Protestants do, most inconsistently with the natural unalienable right of private judgment in religious matters, practise even among themselves, to the destruction of charity, mutual forbearance and peace.

QUESTION.

How shall we behave to others, if they endeavour to force their religion upon us?

ANSWER.

Force may make hypocrites, but cannot alter opinions. Yet for peace's sake, comply with them in every indifferent thing, which are for the most part the things contended for by bigots. But suffer patiently, when you cannot defend yourself, rather than do any thing inconsistent with God's glory or the good of his creatures, especially in countenancing the false impious doctrine and cruel practice of persecution. And encourage yourself with this consideration, that strength of mind and habits of virtue, which fit men both for this and a future state, are best acquired, most illustrated, and surest fortified by severe exercise and trial. And do not repine at providence, which makes every thing conspire to the good of the whole, by ways far above our conception. But strive to act your part well in this state to the last, and remove, at the call of him who placed you here, with good humour and contentment, whether you be in

a high or low station, in prosperity or adversity, it is all one with respect to the next; for if you act the part assigned you here well, you will be sure to have the approbation of the Ruler of the universe, with the approbation of your own, and that of every other good mind; and the more so, in proportion to the difficulties you have surmounted. The triumph of virtue in adverse circumstances, which are the proper scene for the display of true magnanimity and resignation to the will of God, is much more glorious than that in prosperity; wherein it is well if men do not lose their sense of dependence upon the Deity, and that social affection to, and sympathy with, the poor and distressed, whence only can arise inward tranquillity and conscious worth, which are infinitely more valuable and lasting than all outward possessions.

Q U E S T I O N.

How hath it come to pass, that mankind, whose natural dispositions or inclinations determine them to love God and one another; have, contrary to these natural propensities and impulses of humanity, *persecuted* one ano-

ther upon account of religion itself; the design of which is to promote peace on earth, and good-will towards men.

A N S W E R.

Persecution (the least uneasiness given to our neighbour upon account of different belief is such, and an acting from the Popish principle of not keeping faith with heretics) hath arisen from a gross mistake of most Christians, placing their religion in the belief of a set of traditional opinions, about which, tho' they themselves are endlessly divided, yet they will pronounce all, who do not believe as they do, to be God's enemies, and objects of hatred. Whereas true religion consists not in mere faith or belief of any set of opinions whatever, but in love, or charity, flowing from a benevolent disposition or kind temper, which God, who is love or goodness itself, hath impressed as his own image upon our minds; so that he only who loves, knows God, imitates and obeys him in loving mankind, and promoting their good to the utmost of his power, is a godly or religious man, whether he believes traditions or not.

Consequently all which tend not to the cherishing and improving this benevolent or God-like temper, which is best judged of by our actions, are false principles, from whence spring all such inhumane, irreligious, ungodly practices, as persecution, with all its horrid terrible effects; against which we can never be enough guarded, as it defaces God's image in our minds, and tends to eradicate it altogether.

C O N C L U S I O N.

Let us, therefor, carefully endeavour to obey the will of God, imprinted upon our minds, and written in our hearts, and not to spend our time in seeking it any where else; for this is the only certain way by which God communicates his pleasure to all mankind, if they attend to it. To cultivate and improve this good disposition or kind temper of mind, by the constant sincere practice of virtue or morality is what can only make us happy in all times and places; nothing substituted in its room can do it, or can atone for the want of it, and nothing but it can be acceptable to, or approveable by God. Whoever, therefor,

hath neglected to improve this good and God-like temper, or deviated from the pleasant paths of virtue, either through weakness of reason and strength of selfish passions, or by being perverted by false teaching and bad example, must return to the paths of virtue, and have his will renewed, or his temper mended, by attending close to the dictates of his conscience and reason, or the will of God within him; for by no other method can true peace of mind, and everlasting happiness be attained. Virtue, to which happiness is necessarily connected; and vice, to which misery is necessarily connected, *i. e.* merit and demerit, are altogether personal things, and so can neither be transferred or imputed, or yet any how exchanged. If you shall ever be obliged, for the sake of peace, to comply with the external rites and customs of worship prevailing in your country; remember then, that such outward performances cannot supply the place of true piety or religious worship, which is internal, or of the mind; a perpetual sense of our dependence on God, and a constant desire or endeavour to fulfil his will, in promoting the happiness of mankind, by the

practice of justice and charity. And being instructed in true religion, or morality, stripped of all the mythology and pomp, which law-givers have thought it necessary to clothe it with, in order to strike the fancy, and so engage the attention of the people, that they might inform their understandings, in sound morals and obedience to good laws; we ought not, therefor, to run down all the mythology and established rites of a country, while they are made any how subservient to the end of government, or good of society; and not substituted in the place of morality or religion itself, to serve the purposes of ignorance and slavery. But those are the best constituted governments, and liable to the least abuse, in which morality and immorality only are rewarded and punished, and every one is equally protected in worshipping God according to his own conscience, without either encouragements or discouragements, which tend to destroy sincerity and honesty; unless any maintain principles that are inconsistent with the good of society, as Papists and persecutors do; for no plea of private conscience can be sustained against public safety.

A
V I E W
OF THE
NECESSITARIAN or BEST
S C H E M E:
F R E E D F R O M

The OBJECTIONS of M. CROUSAZ, in his
Examination of Mr. POPE's *Essay on Man*.

STRANGE! that there should be in Nature the idea of an order
and perfection, which NATURE herself wants! That be-
ings which arise from Nature should be so perfect, as to
discover imperfection in her Constitution; and be wise e-
nough to correct that Wisdom by which they were made!

Characteristics, Vol. II.

First printed in the Year 1739.

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A

VIEW of the NECESSITARIAN, or, BEST SCHEME,

FREED FROM

The OBJECTIONS of M. CROUSAZ.

INTRODUCTION.

THE doctrine of *Pre-ordination*, or *Necessity*, was maintained by many of the ancient heathen philosophers, particularly by the Stoics, who thought it consistent with a liberty from compulsion; and what a good influence it had on them, both in high and low life, the emperor Antoninus and Epictetus are bright examples. The same doctrine hath been espoused by many Christians, and by them thought to be expressly contained in the Scriptures. A gentleman of M. Croufaz's reading cannot but see this. I see no reason,

therefor, why M. Croufaz calls this the Leibnitzian system; though that eminent philosopher, M. Leibnitz, maintained it with great acuteness.

M. Croufaz hath reasoned little from the nature of the thing against the doctrine of Pre-ordination, or Necessity; but hath laid together a good many popular objections against what he imagines to be its consequences. But if several of these objections are not the fair consequences of this doctrine; or, if M. Croufaz knew that they were not owned to be so by them on the other side of the question, it seems not very consistent with his candour to press them in the manner he does. And, particularly, if the ingenious author, and celebrated poet's words, upon whom he remarks, will, in some places, bear a good sense, as M. Croufaz is sensible*, it appears strange, that he, "who loves to see God spoken of with reverence," should, in the same page, put an ill one upon them, and that in the most indecent expressions. But not to insist upon things of this kind, I proceed to

* P. 105.

lay down and consider the doctrine of Necessity, or Pre-ordination itself, and its consequences. M. Croufaz himself gives a good account of this system from its defenders †, which is well worth transcribing.

SECTION I.

“ GOD, that is to say, the Eternal Being,
 “ is such, that it implies a contradiction
 “ for him not to be ; infinite in power,
 “ infinite in knowlege, he comprehends in
 “ himself the ideas of every thing he hath
 “ power to give being to. An infinity of
 “ worlds presents itself to his mind ; but a-
 “ mong the ideas of these innumerable worlds,
 “ there appeared one, which, upon the whole,
 “ presented a work more perfect than all o-
 “ thers ; and God infinitely wise, and infi-
 “ nitely perfect, was detertermined not by
 “ constraint, or against his will, but with
 “ a full and perfect approbation, to pre-
 “ fer to all the rest the system which at
 “ present exists, and of which we ourselves

† P. 16, and 17.

“ make a part: the all-perfect nature of God
“ did not suffer him to chuse any other.”

M. Croufaz says,* “ There is something, specious and sublime in this system, and very proper to deceive.” And, on the contrary, the notions of this system appear to me so natural and consistent, that they cannot be overthrown. Nay, M. Croufaz does not venture to attack it directly; but endeavours to shew that it is attended with strange consequences. “ Let us, adds he, examine what is built on “ these principles. In order that the universe “ might be infallibly such as God its Creator “ had conceived it, every thing which it comprehends must subsist by necessity; and every thing that is doing in it necessarily “ and infallibly comes to pass.”

These are fair consequences from the above principles; therefor, if the principles are true, the consequences must be admitted.

M. Croufaz goes on with a discourse about machines, corporeal and spiritual. That our bodies are machines is not denied; but I never heard that ever Mr. Leibnitz, or Mr. Pope,

* P. 17.

called spirits, or intelligences, machines. Mr. Leibnitz did indeed maintain some peculiar notions about the operations of the soul and body, which he explained by a pre-established harmony ; but I do not see what ground M. Croufaz hath to charge Mr. Pope, or any other defender of the Necessitarian Scheme, with these opinions.

That the material world, and every part of it, goes on according to the determination and direction of its Almighty and all-wise Creator and Preserver, nothing happening in it contrary to his design, is not disputed by M. Croufaz, nor any wise man. And as the same perfect Being made and preserves the intellectual world ; it appears as evidently absurd to contend that any thing in it comes to pass contrary to his design. But M. Croufaz can conceive no determination applicable to spirits, but by mechanical impulse ; which yet in some cases, as diseases of the body, affect the soul. I will, therefor, endeavour to shew him the determination which necessarily, and at all times, affects intelligent beings. And in few words, it is a natural desire of good or happiness. This

desire of happiness, which is essential to every intelligent being, necessarily determines them, not by compulsion, but voluntarily, to prefer and do every thing, which is within their limited power to do, that appears to them, at the time and circumstances they are in, to be, upon the whole, for their happiness. And thus, as God who makes them with this desire of happiness, and with certain capacities of reason, degrees of knowledge and natural powers, and, likewise, places them in certain circumstances; every thing they do necessarily comes to pass, according to the perfect design of the Creator and Governour of both the corporeal and intellectual worlds.

This is the scheme of Necessity, which is according to nature, common sense, feeling, or experience; and so, easy to be defended.

SECTION. II.

ANY thing that looks like a direct argument against the necessarily Best System by M. Croufaz, is what follows. “Is it permitted

“ to a man to believe that he is well enough
 “ assured of the depths of divine knowlege,
 “ and has an idea of it juſt enough to conclude
 “ from thence, that it was not poſſible for this
 “ infinite Intelligence to form different plans
 “ of the univerſe, every one of which ſhould
 “ be as perfect and as worthy of the choice of
 “ its divine Author as the reſt ?” *

But what is this to the purpoſe ? Is M. Crou-
 faz well enough aſſured of the depths of divine
 knowlege to aſſert, on the contrary, that
 there is no beſt plan of the univerſe more wor-
 thy of its divine Author than any other ?

Allowing that among imperfect plans, ſome
 may equally be good, and that the divine pow-
 er extends to the production of any of them ;
 yet it ſeems to me no daring piece of temerity,
 to aſſert that the perfection of God will not ſuf-
 fer him to produce a worſe ſyſtem when a bet-
 ter is poſſible.

M. Croufaz goes on †. “ It is by choice of
 “ God’s goodneſs intirely free that he was de-
 “ termined to create, rather than not to cre-
 “ ate. It is enough to ſay, that he was not

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* P. 32.

† P. 33.

“ forced to it ; we must add, that he was
“ willing it should be so by a choice perfectly
“ free.” It is confessed here, that it was good,
to create ; nay, better to create, than not cre-
ate. Could God in this case chuse not to cre-
ate ? No, certainly. The perfection of his
nature would not allow him to prefer what
was worse, not to create, to that which was
better, to create. His essential goodness ne-
cessarily determined him to will creation. But
God was not forced, or compelled to produce
happy intelligences, as M. Croufaz in his pious
reflections, which follow after what I last
quoted, would, by altering the state of the
case, unfairly charge upon his antagonist’s
principles.

M. Croufaz *, in order to shew that all the
works of God “ were not the necessary conse-
quences of a preference which the divine wis-
dom could not help making”, brings an in-
stance from mountains, which, though he
he owns them fit and necessary to be in the
earth, yet he affirms their order is not necessa-
ry, but may be altered without any inconveni-

* P. 45.

ence. Upon making such a change of the situation of mountains as he supposes, he says, “ The diurnal revolution of the earth would
 “ be made with the same regularity, and the
 “ mountains present the same positions to the
 “ sun.” But might not other inconveniences ensue? would the vapours be collected in the same measure and quantity? and the same springs and rivulets, formed upon such a change of situation of the mountains, to water the same plains below? There may be other reasons from the internal structure of the earth, which we are intirely ignorant about, that may cause a ridge of mountains to be necessarily as they are. I wonder to find the opposers of the Necessity Scheme run to such instances of an indifference of things, which are built entirely upon their own ignorance of the whole of the case. As well might a man, ignorant of the structure and use of all the parts of a human body, argue, that though he sees a heart, stomach, liver, etc. necessary to the body, yet he cannot see that any inconvenience would arise upon their situations being changed from what they are.

These are the principal arguments I find urged by M. Croufaz, against the Leibnitzian system, as he calls it, drawn from the nature of the thing; I go on next to consider those arising from its consequences.

SECTION III.

“ BUT though I should be complaisant
“ enough to agree, says M. Croufaz, *
“ that it was necessary for God to prefer a
“ world entirely perfect to one which, upon
“ the whole, was less so; yet the system of
“ machines and fatalism is not established by
“ this concession; for I insist upon it, and this
“ affirmation seems to me evidently true, that
“ an universe, in which there should be free
“ and truly active intelligences, would be a
“ work much more worthy of God, than a
“ world where good and evil, virtue and vice,
“ are the infallible and inevitable consequences
“ of the construction of every being, and of
“ the first impulse which the Creator impressed
“ on them.”

* P. 34.

M. Croufaz hath affirmed this; therefor it must be true. Whenever he is at a loss for a reason against the principles he would expose, M. Croufaz returns always to his pious and devout reflections, and sets them in a noxious and false light, What follows in some pages to support the truth of the above affirmation, may take with vulgar readers, who, being no good judges of sound reasoning, are dazzled with a flaming shew of devotion and zeal for religion. M. Croufaz has heard a story of a Scotch minister *: I reckon he hath heard of the Scotch covenant too; by which the Scots made a bargain with God, that he only should be their God, and they only his people, exclusive of almost all the world besides. For, though Mr. Leibnitz, Mr. Pope, and several others, have professedly espoused the Scheme of Necessity in defence of providence, to vindicate the ways of God to man; yet M. Croufaz reckons all on that side of the question, Libertines, enemies to God and religion; and those on his side of the question, the defenders of religion †. M. Croufaz says ‡, Nothing

* P. 27.

† P. 37.

‡ P. 38.

can withstand the clear proofs of their doctrines of religion but an obstinate resolution. How modest and charitable is this ! But in answer to the above affirmation ; if scripture, which all sects claim authority from, was allowed to be brought into philosophical disputes, which are only to be determined by the nature and reason of the thing, I might cite texts too on my side, as well as M. Croufaz does on his side of the question * : I keep therefor to the laws of philosophizing.

I have shewn † from the ideas which naturally arise from common sense or feeling, that man, though free from compulsion or restraint, yet is necessarily determined, by the constitution his nature, to desire happiness ; and that this natural desire of good or happiness necessarily determines him, at the time and circumstances he is in, to be, upon the whole, for it. If M. Croufaz will call such a creature as this a machine, we shall not dispute about a word. Machines being taken in this sense, I deny every word of M. Croufaz's affirmation above cited.

* P. 36.

† P. 205, 206.

An absolutely perfect creature is an impossibility and contradiction in itself. M. Croufaz allows this himself †. The best possible creatures, therefore, must, of necessity, have some degrees of folly or vice in their constitution, whether upon M. Croufaz's scheme, or its contrary. The question then will not be, Whether a world of intelligent beings, where some degrees of vice or folly are the infallible consequences of their constructions; or a world of absolutely perfect creatures would be a work more worthy of God? For this last part of the supposition is impossible, and contradictory, even in the best system of beings. But the question would be, Whether a world in which there should be intelligent free creatures, free not only from compulsion, but from a determination to desire and pursue their happiness; or a world in which there should be intelligent creatures under a necessary determination, from the construction of their own being, or nature of their own existence, to desire and pursue what appears to them to be, upon the whole, their good or happiness, would be a work more

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† P. 32.

worthy of God? This, I say, is the proper state of the question between the maintainers of the Necessitarian Scheme and its contrary.

And my answer to this is, first, As there is a necessity for God to prefer a more perfect work to a less perfect one, a world of intelligent necessary beings, as it is here explained, being what we actually find in this world; therefor, this is a work more worthy of God than a world of intelligent free beings, free from all manner of determination or necessity, otherwise God could not have preferred this to the other,

But M. Croufaz will dispute the fact; and it can only be determined by experience. M. Croufaz must answer for himself; I for myself, whether we are free to will, or chuse evil, as evil, but only under the apprehension of good? This was never questioned by the antient philosophers. Nay, it was an established maxim among them, “ That no man could will, or chuse evil, as evil, but under the appearance of good”. But M. Croufaz replies in a quotation, from the *Bibliothèque Germanique*, “ That when “ the soul is on many occasions in a state

“ of doubt and suspense, then she is under no determination at all.”† To this I answer, that the soul is even in all these cases under the same determination to pursue happiness ; but her ignorance of what may be the best means to it determines her to suspend her judgment and deliberate upon the best means. M. Croufaz will ask again, If two means to the same end be in all respects equally good, shall we live in that irresolution for ever, which would be extremely prejudicial to us ; because, there can be nothing in this case to determine our choice but mere will ? I answer, That such cases seldom, or never happen. But allow they did, one of the two equal means, it must, of necessity, use ; but there being no preference, or betterness, in the nature of the thing, the will cannot be concerned about them ; it must, of necessity, be quite indifferent ; so we take any of them by chance and random ; or, more properly, mere mechanical causes determine the case : for instance ; pity determines me to give a shilling to an object ; I put my hand into my pocket where there are

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† P. 39. etc.

several shillings all equally good ; I take out the first my hand falls upon by chance, and no other ; for this plain reason, this shilling being equally good with the rest, it is not worth my while to put by this and take another. In short, if men are always necessarily determined to will or chuse, what appears best to them, and only free from this determination in indifferent cases ; such freedom is not worth contending for.

Let us now examine which of the two works, or systems of liberty or necessity, would be more worthy of God by a comparison of their good or ill consequences.

Men being free to do as they will, but under a necessity of willing their own happiness, many of the absurd consequences which are ignorantly drawn from this notion of necessity are the true consequences of the notion of liberty ; such as, “ that it overthrows the simple “ and natural ideas of morality, of just and unjust, laudable and punishable.” †

For the happiness of intelligent beings consisting in their living up, or as near, to the rules of morality as possible ; this necessity,

† P. 101.

therefor, which determines them to pursue happiness, does, at the same time, determine them to practise morality, the true way to happiness. And the punishments, or pains, of all sorts, attending vice or immorality, are necessary means to determine them to virtue or morality. But on the scheme of liberty, where men are not necessarily determined by pleasure or pain, virtue or vice, naturally attended with pleasure or pain, would be mere indifferent things to them, and rewards or punishments, praise or dispraise, could never affect those who have no determination to desire happiness.

Upon the Scheme of Necessity men are determined to embrace reasons and opinions which appear to be for their good. But if men have no necessary desire of happiness, they would not be affected with reasons and opinions of any kind; so that to reason, or write, upon the scheme of liberty would be an useless thing, but necessary means to bring about an end upon the other scheme*.

Virtue is in its own nature amiable and pleasant, vice painful and detestable: this de-

* P. 110. of Examination, etc.

termines men, who necessarily desire their own happiness, to approve of the one and disapprove of the other, both in themselves and other people; hence, that self-reproach, or remorse and shame, upon viewing our own character when vicious, are necessary means to determine us to improve in virtue. But these things can be of no use in a scheme where men are not necessarily determined to pursue happiness, and to embrace the means of it.

The Scheme of Necessity is a scheme laid to improve intelligent beings in virtue, in order to happiness, which they necessarily desire, and when they are convinced by reasons that their private happiness is included in the good of the whole, they will be necessarily determined to promote it. But what good end can be attained on the scheme of liberty, where intelligent beings may freely, or willingly, and knowingly, reject happiness and all the means to it? God can propose no end but what such creatures may defeat; he can foresee nothing which is entirely in the will of these free creatures to do, or not; and they being free to chuse pleasure or pain, as such, nothing but

compulsion, or force, can make them do, or hinder them from doing, what they will, if it was to save, or ruin, the whole creation I conclude, therefor, upon this comparison of the consequences of the schemes of liberty and necessity, that a world of intelligent beings under a necessary determination, from the constitution of their natures, to pursue happiness, is a work much more worthy of God, than a world of intelligent beings free from such a determination.

SECTION IV.

BUT the grand objection to the Necessitarian Scheme remains to be answered. Which is, “ That God having laid the whole of this
 “ scheme, or scheme of the world, and pre-
 “ ordained whatsoever comes to pass in it ;
 “ he is, therefor, the author of all the ill as
 “ well as good in it.” To this we answer, that as God is perfectly good to design the best scheme of the universe, perfectly wise to contrive it, and infinitely powerful to execute it ;

there can be nothing evil with respect to the whole creation. And seeing that in this immense whole there are an infinity of things mutually relative, of which a finite mind can have but an imperfect view; this must, of necessity, occasion imperfect appearances of things, in themselves really perfect, if fully seen; these appearances, therefor, can be no objections against this scheme. If the opponents of this scheme of a perfect whole, will contend that these appearances of imperfection, or evil, are real evils, or imperfections, it falls to their part to prove it; since the appearances of evil not only agree with our hypothesis, but are necessary consequences of it.

Right and wrong, good and evil, are relative terms. What may be ill for me, may be good for the whole neighbourhood. In war several individuals are wounded, several killed; this war ensures liberty to one nation, and reclaims their ambitious enemies. Where is the virtue of those who do not willingly suffer for the good of their country? It is better for them to die gloriously than to survive their virtue. Contradictions cannot possibly hap-

pen; contrarieties are necessary; for out of these, harmony and good arise. Storms and calms are contraries, yet both are necessary. What signifies the loss of some ships, *etc.* in a storm, which clears a stagnant air from infections which might sweep off the whole race of mankind; yet a continual storm would retard all business, and ruin every thing.

M. Croufaz, and those in his way, will not deny but that in the natural world ~~thing~~ comes to pass according to the design and direction of its architect; however they do not allow this in the moral world. But,

*If plagues or earthquakes break not Heav'n's
design,*

Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?

This is not a confounding of moral and physical ills, as M. Croufaz answers *. If physical evils which occasion pain to intelligent beings are not real evils, but necessary means to bring about great pleasure, or real good; why may not the pains attending, or occasioned by, mo-

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* P. 90

ral evils, be also necessary means to produce greater pleasure or real good? And thus the existence of the one can be no objection to the perfections of the author of the whole scheme of things, more than the existence of the other sort of evils; none of them, neither physical nor moral ills, being really, and upon the whole, evils, but necessary means to universal good.

M. Croufaz owns *, that God draws useful effects from vice, though he says, vice is not necessary. Upon this I ask him, are these useful effects, or this good which God draws from vice, necessary, or not? If they are not necessary, could not God have prevented the premises from which they are drawn to exist? could not God have kept such vicious characters as Borgia or Cataline out of the scheme of creation? or has he willingly suffered them to exist, to make the world worse than it would have been without them? But if M. Croufaz will not grant these absurdities; but will say, "That the goodness, wisdom and power of God is more to be admired in not suffering

* P. 149.

“ vice to produce all the ill in society that
 “ might naturally arise from it, but even draw
 “ useful effects from it : * ” then it is evident,
 even upon this scheme, that certain degrees of
 vice are necessary for the display of God’s
 goodness, wisdom and power, and necessary
 premises from which God draws useful effects;
 and therefore, worthy not only to be permitted,
 but to be ordained by him.

Gods sends a plague or famine, among a
 people who are just about to invade their
 neighbours, or are already engaged in a war
 against them to subject them to their own
 yoke. These are chastisements, M. Croufaz
 will say †, “ to reform both these who feel them
 themselves, and those who are witnesses of
 them in others.” In like manner, God raises
 up a vicious prince to chastise a vicious people;
 or even supposing them not actually vicious,
 to call forth their virtues into exercise, by his
 oppressions: this reforms the people, or im-
 proves and strengthens their virtues. A wick-
 ed prince then is as necessary as a plague, or fa-
 mine, and worthy of God for his author. And

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* P. 129.

† P. 88.

if the people are determined to chastise the vicious prince in their turn, to reform both him who feels it, and those who are witnesses of it; this would not be ordaining contradictions, no more than when, in the case of the plague, the people take medicines appointed for the cure of it. Hence, contrary to what M. Croufaz asserts *, all nature continually concurs in procuring good for men, either to reform them from vice, or to determine them to virtue and improve them in it.

*Cease then, nor order imperfection name :
 Our proper blifs depends on what we blame.
 Know thy own point : this kind, this due degree
 Of blindness, weakness, heav'n bestows on thee.
 Submit—in this, or any other sphere,
 Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear,
 Safe in the hand of one disposing pow'r,
 Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
 All nature is but art, unknown to thee ;
 All chance, direction which thou canst not see :
 All discord, harmony not understood :
 All partial evil, universal good :*

*And spight of pride, in erring reason's spight,
One truth is clear; Whatever is, is right.*

Mankind are made naked, or ignorant of the means of good and evil, though with a necessary determination to pursue the one and avoid the other: but being finite creatures they are incapable to receive any great degrees of knowledge, virtue and happiness all at once; in these, therefore, they must be trained up by a continual progress. This world is a scheme laid for such an improvement. We experience the pleasures of virtue, or kind affection; this determines us to improve in it: and we experience the pains of vice, or unkind affection; and this determines us to avoid it. Repeated experiences improve us in the knowledge of the means of attaining happiness, and our natural desire of it determines us to apply them. But as finite creatures can never become the subjects of infinite, or perfect, properties, some degrees of ignorance, vice, and imperfection, and unhappiness, must, of necessity, be found in the most improved and happy creatures, in the

best world that can be made by the most perfect Being.

If M. Croufaz can prove that God can communicate good or happiness to finite creatures without any mixture of pain or evils ; then, and not till then, I will allow that this is not the Best Scheme, where a mixture of both appears to me to be necessary from the nature and fitness of the things themselves, and also from the perfections of their Creator, who would have made them otherwise, if that had not been impossible and contradictory in itself.

C O N C L U S I O N.

UPON this Scheme God ordains all things; and therefor, “ whatever is, is right.” Appearances, the most cross to the cause of virtue, serve, upon the whole, a wise and good end. This belief of theism determines us willingly to submit to the order of nature, fate, or the unalterably wise and good decrees of God. By this faith we are determined never to presume, Alphonso-like, to think that if we had been in

the council of God at creation, we could have directed him to have made a better work; nor vainly to wish that any thing may come to pass otherwise than according to his perfectly wise and good determination. And this faith of theism determines us to love God and all his works; and to concur, as much as we can, in bringing about the great and good design of final universal happiness. But as this is not, and cannot be, completed in this infant state, we are determined to expect another life, in which our happiness will keep pace with our improvement in virtue for ever.

*This infancy of being cannot prove
The final issue of the works of God,
By boundless love and perfect wisdom form'd,
And ever rising with the rising mind! **

M. Croufaz hath written some other pieces on the like subject with this Examination, which I have not yet seen; I may possibly consider them at more leisure. In the mean time, as the principal topics on both sides of the

* Thomson's Summer.

question about liberty and necessity are here briefly debated ; this, perhaps, may be sufficient for to determine on the merits of the cause by people of discernment, who judge not by the number, or bulk, of the writers on any side of a question.

PHILOSOPHICAL LETTERS

CONCERNING

The BEING and ATTRIBUTES

O F

G O D.

First printed in the Year 1737.

F f

PHILOSOPHICAL LETTERS.

L E T T E R. I. *

Reverend S I R,

I HAVE read your very ingenious Vindications of Dr. Clarke's Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God ; and it seems needless to make an apology for offering objections to an Author's principles which he is willing to have cleared of all difficulties.

After I have, Sir, with my utmost attention, considered that great good man's arguments, and your's, brought to prove the neces-

* The following Letters were wrote to the Rev. Mr. JACKSON, a noted Clergyman in England, of a very metaphysical genius, and an admirer and disciple of the great Dr. CLARKE. They were occasioned by two metaphysical Pieces of Mr. JACKSON ; one entitled, " The Existence and Unity of God, proved from his Nature and Attributes." The other, being the *Defence* of it. Mr. JACKSON, though he had all the metaphysical acuteness, yet he wanted the philosophical genius, of Mr. DUDGEON.

fary existence of God, his eternity, immensity, and unity, they appear to me conclusive.

Granting then the existence of one eternal, immense being, I do not understand what can be meant by, "his power being exerted *ad extra*?" frequently supposed and reasoned from both in the *Existence and Unity* *, and *Defence* of it †. A power, either exerted from eternity or time, *ad extra*, with respect to the immense Being, is impossible to conceive: it is supposing him immense and not immense at the same time, which is an express contradiction. And to suppose, that things may exist, in consequence of this exertion of power, *ad extra*, while nothing can be supposed to exist externally to the immense substance, is again a contradiction in terms. All reasonings, therefor, and opinions built upon that impossible and contradictory supposition of God's exerting his power, *ad extra*, are chimerical and groundless, if his immensity is demonstrated.

You seem, Sir, to be sensible of the absurdity of supposing the existence of other substances, besides the immense substance, (though it

* P. 33, 34, etc.

† P. 142, 143, etc.

is always supposed and reasoned from in your books *.) Wherefor you say, “ That the divine omnipresence comprehends, pervades, and fills all things; † ” which expression can imply no more than, that one only immense substance or Being exists, or that God is omnipresent.

More, Sir, might be said in support of the above reasoning, and in consequence of it; but this would be too much to swell a private epistle, and perhaps these subjects are more proper for the conversation of contemplative men, than for a public controversy. I would be glad, however, to know how far these few short observations upon your reasoning in your two Vindications are just or not? And as it is natural for knowing men to be communicative, I expect it from you. I am, with truth and great esteem,

Reverend Sir,

Your most humble Servant.

Dec. 25. 1735.

* Defence, P. 179, and other places.

† Existence and Unity, P. 151.

L E T T E R II.

Reverend S I R,

I AM favoured with your's of the 19th of January; and if any thing satisfactory can be said on the argument before us, I expect it from you, who have written with the greatest clearness and strength of the Existence and Unity of God. But after all your very ingenious reasonings on this subject, yet, "The exertion of God's power in the production or government of things of extraneous essence and substance, or such as are not his substance, (*i. e.* things which have a distinct existence)" seems to me to be impossible; there being neither place for his exertion of power, nor their existence. Exertion of power hath a necessary relation to particular place, time, motion, change; all which ideas are contradictory to our ideas of an immense substance. Creation, production, or government of things *ad extra*, or *ad intra*, are, therefor, contradictory to the nature of an eternal, unchangeable, immense substance or Being.

But supposing the existence of other substances, in consequence of God's exertion of power, to be possible, yet the immense substance cannot comprehend another substance of a different kind, unless it hath vacuity in it, equal to the real dimensions of the comprehended substance, which is a supposing it immense and not immense at the same time; an express contradiction !

But if it be said, that the divine substance penetrates or pervades the substances comprehended by it, and that yet the penetration is not mutual; this is attempting to defend one impossibility by asserting another: or else we must suppose that the one hath no real dimensions, as is alleged*, and consequently is no real distinct substance and existence: wherefor if the divine immensity is demonstrated, as I think it is by you, no other substance exists.

If you allow this reasoning just, one of your discernment will easily see the consequences, and they appear not unworthy of your consideration. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Feb. 10. 1736. Your obliged humble Servant.

* Existence and Unity, P. 91.

L E T T E R. III.

Reverend S I R,

I RECEIVED the favour of your's, of February 23. In it you begin, " That something exists, whether substance or property, which is not the immense substance of God, or any property of it, is self-evident." This I take to be the point yet to be proved. I can easily conceive that the idea of an immense or infinite substance includes the idea of infinite power to support infinite-modes, inhering in it; but that after the existence of one immense substance or Being is demonstrated, there should yet be supposed other substances, finite or infinite, of different kind, to exist, appears to me an absolute impossibility. " The divine power exerted in producing them, "you say," exists, and is exerted in his substance, and the substances produced exist also in his substance, but cannot coincide or mutually penetrate or comprehend each other; by the supposition of their being different in kind." This,

in both letters you obliged me with, you insist upon, and also, in the Defence of the Existence and Unity*. But this supposition of the being of different substances itself, is what I contend to be impossible: agreeable to which you say, in the same page of your book, though not to what you said above, “ That one being can no more have the same presence than the same existence, or than it can be the same being with another.” Now the divine substance being omnipresent, either it hath the same presence with your different substances, which you own to be, as indeed it is, impossible; or else they have no presence at all; and consequently no distinct existence or substance. How you can conceive an immense substance to comprehend another or different substance, I know not; but as I can frame no idea of this, it is an impossible supposition to me: and on the contrary it is evident, that any comprehending substance must have vacuity in it, equal to the real dimensions of the comprehended substance or substances; which to suppose of the immense substance is a plain contradic-

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* P. 179.

tion : and a finite substance of no dimensions, is an absurdity.

The consequence of my reasoning, you think, may infer the impossibility of any existence but of God, which you call an evident absurdity : if by existence you mean substance, I own it, and that he is all in all, and the absurdity appears to lie in the contrary supposition. But if by existence, you mean things immediately dependent upon, supported and comprehended by, the immense all-powerful substance, or Being, it does not, nor do I intend it should, infer any such conclusion.

As to your distinction of existents or substances into solid and unsolid, I have no sort of idea of either of them. Solid and unsolid are ideas only existing in the mind, and being mere ideas, cannot be called properties of any substance. One thing or idea is said to be solid or unsolid, in respect of others ; but absolute solidity is what you call an abstract idea, and unsolidity is the bare negation of it ; and so are neither of them properties of any being.

From my own existence, I infer the existence of a being, upon which I depend, who

affects me with ideas, attended either with pleasure or pain, independently of my will. Intelligence and will, I infer, by what I experience in myself, to be the properties of that Being, which either must be the self-existent Being, or must depend upon some other, till by necessary deductions of reason, we come to the self-existent Being, who, as he exists by a necessity of nature, must exist always and every where. Intelligence and will, as they are properties of the One, eternal, infinite Being, have no relation to particular place, time, *etc.* But for volitions, reflections, *etc.* they have a necessary relation to particular time at least: production of substances, in consequence of exertion of power, must be, and they must exist, in some particular place, in all place, or no place; which suppositions are all equally impossible: the first two being contradictory to the divine immensity, and the last contradictory in itself.

This production must also have a necessary relation to particular time; for to suppose an eternal thing produced, is a contradiction in terms: and whether you can suppose produc-

tion, without including in that idea, at the same time, a certain degree of motion and change, you know best. I cannot conceive of it otherwise.

Upon the whole, as the existence of different substances is impossible, so neither do I see the supposition of them needful; the one infinite, eternal, intelligent substance, being all-sufficient, by which all things consist, and in which all things have their being; whose existence, (if that was possible to be supposed) being taken away, all things would fall to nothing. I am, sincerely,

Reverend Sir,

Your very much obliged humble Servant.

March 16. 1736.

P. S. If it be asked, what is meant by the term *I*? does it not denote a distinct substance? The answer is, that the term *I* denotes a very simple thing, which cannot be properly, or in truth, called a distinct substance;

for when I consider what I am, I find that I have such a necessary relation to, and dependence on many things in nature, nature itself, universal mind, or God, that if his power which supports all things was suspended, I would cease to exist; the suspension of God's power being a contradiction to necessity of existence. Hence the eternity of all independent things is evident.

To conclude this long Letter and Postscript; neither sense nor reason informs me of any other existents, than that of the One, only, immense substance, or universal mind, finite intelligences, dependent upon, and supported by him, and ideas. The chimerical distinction of substances into spiritual and material, hath confounded all the reasonings on metaphysical subjects, and filled natural philosophy with paradoxes and contradictions, such as the existence and motion of substances in substances, the infinite divisibility of finite extension, *etc.*

L E T T E R IV.

Reverend SIR,

THE favour of your's, of the last of March, I have. One's own existence is the first part of knowlege. His doubting of the existence of all other things, makes him perceive his own existence or thinking, which cannot be abstracted one from the other. I confess my own existence, most certain, but that *I*, a distinct substance, exist, I never said. On the contrary I said, that I immediately depend upon, and am supported and comprehended by the all-powerful, omnipresent substance of God; which is consistent with the existence of one only substance, and every thing's being modifications of his essence, the necessary consequences of the proofs for the immensity of God. Eternity, immensity, power, intelligence, are properties of God; and you own, "Qualities or properties inhering in one another, or properties of properties; and, that space and time are properties of God only,

may, are his individual immensity and duration: *” as to what follows of contingent existences, finite, or infinite, I know not what you mean by them. I see no room for their supposition in a scheme where intelligence and design take place. “ The finite continuance, or time of every thing, is their existence in particular portions of God’s duration,” you say in the same page. Now, may not their finite existence itself, be as well particular portions of God’s immensity or substance, and their finite intelligence particular portions of God’s intelligence; or, to use another expression of yours, “ particular conceptions of his being, or different modes of apprehension. †” By volitions, reflections, *etc.* I mean, therefore, modes of intelligence, or partial conceptions of it.

As to space, its being in common speech, and even by philosophers, called a vacuity, it is not to the purpose; and I would have thought, that the ingenious Mr. Jackson would not have followed either the vulgar or learned

* Existence and Unity, P. 80, 81.

† Defence, P. 65.

opinion in this, after he hath demonstrated, that the divine substance fills all space, which cannot then be a vacuity, for finite substances to be comprehended, or to move in.

Whatever, therefor, is conceived to exist in this immense substance, must be properties of it, or partial conceptions of its being. The relative ideas of motion and resistance, solidity and unsolidity, are excited in me; but that a merely inert substance, such as matter is imagined to be, should be the cause of these ideas, is a plain contradiction to its inactivity; nor can I, from these ideas, infer any other existence, but that of the universal cause or mind, who stands in no need of second causes, instruments, and occasions.

You have made several suppositions about absolute motion, *etc.* in your books, which depend upon the doctrine of abstraction, which make some think, that they have ideas, when indeed they have none, but are making impossible suppositions; which I might shew, had I now leisure from the necessary avocations of a husbandman.

Two or more beings of the same presence,

is a contradictory supposition : it is supposing them different beings, while they are the same being. That something exists, is evident *a posteriori* ; that one eternal, immense substance exists, is demonstrable *a priori* ; therefor, as two or more beings can no more have the same presence than the same existence, no other substance exists, but the One, eternal, immense, intelligent Substance, or Being ; and all things are modes, or partial conceptions of his existence or essence. This I take to be strict demonstration, or else I know not what it is. Space being God's individual immensity or presence, *we* are therefor partial conceptions of his presence and substance, or else you must suppose, that we have a distinct presence or existence in a part of space, a mere vacuity, where God is not present ; and what are the consequences of this supposition, I need not say——.

One only, eternal, immense, all-powerful, intelligent Being or substance existing, and all things being modifications of his essence ; all volitions, reflections, *etc.* I own with you, are therefor not properties distinct from the pro-

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perties of the infinite, eternal intelligence and will, *etc.* of God, but partial conceptions of them. An eternal exertion of power in producing substances, is, I think, a very improper expression, and not less indeed, than a contradiction in terms; a supposing that things were produced, which existed eternally, and so were never produced. And to suppose the existence of eternal power, possibly to be exerted only in a finite determinate time, involves, as you say, several absurdities: therefor God's power; which supports all things, existed eternally, and will exist eternally, as his infinite substance, which includes that property, is self-existent: the exertion and suspension of God's power, in a particular time, are therefor contradictions to necessary existence; and an eternal creation or production is no creation at all.

The existence and motion of substances in substances, (which must be, if other substances exist and move in the divine substance) is as evident an absurdity as transubstantiation itself; and truly I do not see, but that Christ may as well be present in a wafer, as God

may be in any other substance. The infinite divisibility of finite extension, which I transiently mentioned in my last, is not only a difficulty, as you call it, but an express contradiction; a supposing a part of extension finite and infinite at the same time: but this tenet, and many more, are founded upon the doctrine of abstraction, or the art of fancying impossible suppositions. I am sincerely, and respectfully,

Reverend Sir,

Your most humble Servant.

April 10. 1736.

P. S. Necessity is the foundation of existence, both of the divine substance, and all the attributes*. To talk then of arbitrary exertions of God's power, and all its consequences, as the Dr. does†, in contradiction to a natural

* Dr CLARKE's Answer to a viith Letter.

† Prop ix. and x. of his Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.

necessity, while a necessity of fitness he owns, is unintelligible to me; for this necessity of fitness is founded in nature, and therefor is a natural necessity, and according to him, antecedent to the will of God, and is the reason or cause of his willing so and so.

L E T T E R V.

Reverend S I R,

I AM favoured with your's of April 24; and give me leave to take notice of the last part of your Letter first; which is the commendable zeal you shew in opposing tenets, which you think inconsistent with sense, philosophy, and religion: but then I would not have you too forward, as some learned men have been, in tacking absurd consequences to true principles, which, upon due consideration, will be found not to follow: besides you know that if any principles are demonstratively true, their fair consequences must be admitted, be what they will. I assure you, Sir, that I never did, or shall, knowingly maintain, or defend any principles, which are inconsistent with that philosophy and virtue, which is founded in nature, sense, reason, and experience, and not in mere fancy or imagination; unless it be, for this good reason, *viz.* to have

them solidly confuted; and so I resume the point in debate. It is precisely this.

I allege, and sincerely believe, till I see better reasons to the contrary, that the arguments for the existence, immensity, and unity of the divine substance, if they are conclusive, prove that no other substance exists: and I think it more consistent with sense, reason, and virtue, or true philosophy, to give up the existence of all other substances, than the divine substance, which is all-sufficient. And it appears to me, with the evidence of a maxim, “That if God exists always, and every where, he is every thing, whether substance or properties;” and according to the first intent, and reason of my writing to you, the trouble of proving the contrary falls to your part. However, as I have not only made, but endeavoured to prove my objection, I shall again try to clear it from the great and evident absurdities which you think do attend this notion, which appear to be the consequence of your own arguments. In order to this, I observe,

First, That the foundation of all your rea-

soning to the contrary of what I still think demonstration, is built only upon a bare supposition, or a thing taken for granted, which ought first to be proved, *viz.* “ The existence of material or immaterial substance, the mode of whose existence, or presence, is essentially distinct from God’s.” This substance is by Mr. Locke and all the logicians, confessed to be an unknown subject; and therefor, as I have no idea of it, either from sense or reason, it evidently appears to me, to have no other mode and place of existence or presence, than all other castles of the air, or works of mere imagination have, which a lively fancy can create and vary ten thousand ways, and annihilate at pleasure. But I cannot see why all such fancies are opposed to a real existing, or self-existent substance, or being, or mind, the cause of all things or ideas, which are the effects, not second causes, from whence I infer their cause, *viz.* God, and not an unknown subject. All our knowledge, but of God, is about ideas: they exist only in the mind, and their essence and modes consist only in being perceived; and from their being excited in us, inde-

pendently of our will, we immediately infer their cause, who excites them in us, and at the same time makes us capable of perceiving them and comparing them, *etc.*

This being so in fact, I presume that my demonstration of the existence of one, only, immense, *etc.* substance, remains unshaken. Not to multiply words,

Secondly, and lastly, I observe, that besides the above chimerical notion of material substance, you have a true idea of matter; which matter, you say, may be seen and felt; and I add, tasted, smelled, and heard, likewise. These ideas, I am certain, as I said above, are excited in me by the immediate cause of all things, who at the same time makes me capable of perceiving them, and not by an unknown subject.

It is extremely ridiculous to talk any thing about an unknown subject, that it exists, that it is active, which exciting of ideas implies, or even passive, if a passive substance was sense; a substance or thing supporting, and passiveness, or being supported, are opposites. A thing, or idea, may be relatively, or impro-

perly, said to support other things ; as the earth is said to produce or support vegetables, *etc.* But who, except those who take the name of philosophers for wandering after second causes, knows not, that God is the immediate support or cause of earth, water, air, fire, vegetables, and all the various combinations of sensible ideas ; and further, “ That we are his offspring, and that he works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, and than none can resist his will.” God exists necessarily : his disposition or desire is necessarily good : his will necessarily follows, or is subservient to, or determined by his disposition : his knowledge and power are both necessarily subservient to his will, as that is to his natural disposition ; and thus the chain of necessity, (not an external, but an internal necessity) lies in order of nature, and runs through all God’s necessary and voluntary * manifestations of himself ; and there is no real or absolute evil, sin, or error, in all nature ; although some ideas are relatively pleasant or painful, as are

* *Will* is not opposed to necessity, but to outward co-action, or *force*.

the ideas of virtue and vice. I hope you will be pleased to consider and discuss the main objection, before you proceed to its consequences. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your sincere Friend and Servant.

May 5. 1736.

P. S. Since I wrote to you last, a *Defence of Human Liberty*, 2d Edit. came to my hand. And in my opinion, the true notion of Necessity is stated *; and Plotinus his arguments against it, which he calls an "Excess of Necessity," are the true or fair consequences of it, and upon that scheme only, can satisfactory answers be given to your objections † of your additional Vindication of Human Liberty. But I am sorry, that neither my time nor my circumstances will allow me to discuss these matters fully; and I have done more already this way than is consistent with my outward quiet. I

* P. 153.

† P. 53, 54.

am sorry also to see the bonds of charity or virtue most broke through by them who pretend to be most on the side of religion or virtue, in their reasonings, and in their practice or actions. And yet I believe all these things, which I cannot help being sorry for, are ordained of God for the greatest good. Our language is adapted to vulgar conceptions, and not philosophical truth : and therefore, I hope you will not take the advantage of my speaking of actions, which are but passions, and relatively ill ; but really good upon the whole. Far from seeing the relations of things to one another, and to the whole of nature fully, how can we pronounce any wrong in her constitution, or think that any of her works need mending ! On the contrary, our view encreasing, charmed with her perfections, who can help crying out with a noble author, “ O ! glorious Nature ! supremely fair, and sovereignly good ! ” *etc.* You will excuse me. Adieu.

L E T T E R VI.

Reverend S I R,

I WROTE to you May 5th, and have received no answer as yet; but whether you did not get my letter, or got it, and your answer to it is miscarried; or that you do not incline to write again, be the reason of my disappointment, I cannot guess. If I was sure that the last, and none of the two first, was the case, I should not have troubled you more. Any of the letters being lost, I would be glad to repeat it, or have it repeated, that we may, if possible, come to some end in these matters in debate.

In my last, in answer to your's, of April 24th, I shewed that our senses informed us only of the existence of ideas; and from these ideas, which are excited in us independently of our will, we immediately inferred their cause, *viz.* God, and not an unknown subject, as substance is, by all the logicians, said to be. And that it is ridiculous to talk any thing of an un-

known subject, and that nothing can properly, or in truth, be called a substance, but God.

In your's, of April 24th, you say, "Two beings of the same presence are a contradiction, but two beings, the mode of whose existence or presence is essentially distinct, are no contradiction." Spiritual and material substances, you own, do agree in this mode of existence, *viz.* That both are extended, and so occupy a part of space at least, and have dimensions. You also own, "that if matter," to which you attribute solidity, and extension, "was proved to be immense, it would be to my purpose to demonstrate the existence of one only substance:" for the same reason, allowing spiritual substance to be immense, it is as much to my purpose; for where can matter, which hath the same mode of existence with spirit, *viz. Extension*, exist, unless you allow a penetration of dimensions, which is impossible and contradictory?

In short, two or more limited beings of the same or different kinds, may exist in different parts of space, but two beings immense or unlimited, of the same or different kind, cannot

exist in the same place or space, without a penetration of dimensions, which is impossible and absurd ; and a being of no dimensions, or unextended, not occupying space, exists nowhere, or is a chimera ; therefor, if the divine substance fills all space, no other substance can possibly exist of any kind whatever. If God is omnipresent, no other substance exists, but what must have the same presence with him, and so must be the same being.

If you be resolved, Sir, to drop this correspondence, pray let me know it frankly ; that I may apply elsewhere for a solution of some philosophical scruples connected with these principles. I have little time indeed for such inquiries, but a strong desire exciting me on to them ; and if you drop me, I do not know where to find so able a hand to direct and assist me. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your obedient humble Servant.

June 26. 1736.

L E T T E R VII.

Reverend S I R,

I AM favoured with your's of April 11th, in answer to both my last, and am particularly well pleased with the gentle and strong reasoning of it. If I had known when you was in Yorkshire, I might perhaps have spared a few days to have had the advantage of the instructive conversation of so great a philosopher and divine, which my low circumstances and busy life will not allow me to come by at a greater distance. I will ever reckon myself highly obliged to you, for your kind endeavours to give me the true knowlege of God and ourselves, by your letters ; though this end would probably be sooner and easier obtained by conversation, if that could be had conveniently.

Thinking that you had dropped me, I applied to a worthy friend of Dr. Clarke, for further satisfaction on these heads, *viz.* the right reverend, the lord bishop of Winchester * ;

* Dr. Benj. Hoadly.

and I thought it more than needless to offer an apology for addressing so eminent a divine for instruction, whose great abilities and beneficent disposition is acknowledged, even by his enemies. I expect not his answer so soon.

As it is an honour few controversial writers have yet allowed themselves, to yield to the force of reason and truth, and it is none to yield where these do not appear ; I shall shew you how far I acquiesce in your reasonings, and how far I do not. This, by my following sincere thoughts of the matters in debate, laid down in the simplest manner I can, you will judge of.

That one, eternal, infinite, intelligent substance or Being exists, I own to be demonstrated ; but though you say, “ That we perceive not by our senses the substance of God ;” yet I feel that in every instance, I am supported by this universal substance or Being, (and consequently all the qualities or properties, which I am improperly said to support) and who affects me with ideas of pleasure and pain, independently of my will : and this voluntary, and at the same time necessary, activity of God

and passiveness in me, I think constitutes the distinction between the self-existence of God, and my dependent existence. That ideas exist in the self-existent mind, and in the minds of dependent beings, without my mind, I allow; but that there are material unthinking substances, or objects existing without all minds. I rather think that we deceive ourselves, by inferring the existence of any such objects from ideas, which can only exist in the mind, and which one mind can only excite in others, than that our senses are deceived, and so cast what is our own mistake upon providence*.

I do not at all deny God's agency, though I think he acts necessarily, and so in the perfectest manner, as thus I formerly shewed; *viz.* God exists necessarily; his disposition is necessarily good; his will is necessarily determined by his disposition; his wisdom and power are both necessarily determined by his will, as that is by his natural disposition; and so an

* Solidity, resistance, motion, rest, I consider only as ideas or perceptions attended with pleasure or pain, according to the present disposition of finite percipients, not as properties of any substance, which I see no reason for.

internal necessity lies in order of Nature, and runs through all God's necessary, voluntary, and perfect works.

As to the necessity that reigns through the actions of dependent beings, it is complicated and imperfect. We are necessarily determined by the very frame or constitution of our nature to pursue what appears to us, to be our good or happiness: our will is necessarily determined by our natural disposition, or desire of happiness; and our knowledge and power are both necessarily determined by our will, as that is by our natural disposition. (And, therefore, it is to no purpose to talk of a power to act or not to act in any case contrary to this disposition; but our knowledge being attained by slow experience, and our power gradually increased, hence by the necessary constitution of our dependent natures, which cannot admit of perfection, we are unavoidably liable to mistakes or wrong pursuits of our real or greatest happiness in several instances.) This is called a moral necessity, in contradistinction to a natural, or, rather an unnatural, necessity, out-

ward co-action, or force upon us by external circumstances.

Thus our natural disposition or desire of good or happiness is a general fixed principle, which inevitably determines us in all our actions; and whoever attends to what passes in his own mind, will find several passions or affections in it, exciting to this end: some of which, as more strictly regarding the agent himself, are called private passions; and others regarding the system, with which he is connected, are called public or benevolent passions. The exercise of the social passions is our highest enjoyment, and the consistent gratification of all the passions, private and public, is our greatest interest or happiness, which is always obtained in proportion to our degrees of knowledge, power, and external circumstances. And by the constitution of our natures, we are determined to approve of virtue, or a benevolent disposition and course of actions in ourselves and others, and so disapprove of vice, or an entirely selfish disposition and course. This is called the moral sense, which perceives and approves or disapproves of virtue and vice.

And thus virtue hath, and, in my opinion, only can have, a foundation on the Necessitarian scheme; while the scheme of liberty, or of dependent beings their being left to act contrary to the intention and will of God, is contradictory in itself, contrary to fact, and attended with innumerable absurdities.

To suppose a dependent being acting contrary to the intention and will of the Being upon whom it depends, is an express contradiction; a supposing it independent while it is dependent: and granting that a Being of perfect goodness, wisdom, and power, is the author and governor of the universe; every thing in it must be for the best, good, perfect, and according to his intention, will, and immediate direction. The contrary of this cannot be supposed true, without throwing up the perfections of the Deity, his particular direction and government; then indeed endless confusion might ensue.

As to the evils which come to pass, while a perfect Being presides; they must only be relatively, improperly, or apparently so, but really good in the whole scheme of things,

though we do not fully see the relations of things to the whole. And I cannot see why the maintainers of absolute decrees, necessity, or fate, should be blamed for making God the author of evil, *e. g.* in ordaining a tyrant to enslave a people, more than when he destroys a fleet at sea, going to relieve them, by a storm, which is certainly his own immediate work; unless it be said, that he hath left the natural, as well as the moral world, to itself: and granting this absurdity, how can any be sure, that ever he will regard them more? It is evidently inconsistent with the character of a perfect Being to make any of his works ill, or to permit any of them to run wrong, so as to need mending. But why do I insist upon these things to a person of your discernment? If you have any thing further to add upon these subjects, I wait it with pleasure; if not, and if you think that these papers may be of any use to others, you are welcome, for my part, to publish them. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your real Friend and humble Servant.

August 30. 1736.

L E T T E R VIII.

Reverend S I R,

I AM favoured with your's of September 25th, and with one from the bishop of Winchester, who declines to enter upon these subjects; but I am glad we are agreed about the first subject of debate, *viz.* the immensity and power of God, and the existence of one only immense substance; for you allow, " That we, matter, and all things, are continually supported by the infinite, omnipresent substance and power of God." We then are beings dependent upon God, the only immense, all-powerful Substance, in whom we live or exist; and matter may be a collection of sensible objects or ideas existing in the divine mind, (for I can have no notion of substances existing in a mind, and out of the universal mind nothing can exist,) *ad extra* to the minds of all finite percipients. But whether there be objects existing without, or *ad extra*, to all finite minds or not; yet as you allow, that God can excite

the ideas of them in our minds, though they did not exist, these ideas serve all our purposes of pleasure and pain, as well, the impressions themselves being real, as if they did infer external objects or instruments, which indeed we must own, a perfect being stands in no need of in his workings, though limited beings do. God can, (and I see no reason for his doing otherwise) effect every thing by a mere act of his will, without instruments; which yet if he did use, it cannot be said that there is any activity or power in the instruments, but only in the agent: so that I do not see that any powers can be attributed to matter, supposing God used it as an instrument.

I allow you, that we limited beings, as we cannot do otherwise, excite ideas in other minds, by the intervention and mediation of other ideas or sensible objects, which are real things or ideas, not substances, including activity or power.

Having said enough upon this subject, I proceed to consider what seems to me more important; and which the first subjects of debate led us into: *viz.* to consider the nature

of necessity or fate, and the foundation and distinction of virtue or vice upon this scheme. And though you think, that the scheme of necessity ends in atheism, for my part, I cannot see that it does, but on the contrary, when rightly explained, it ends in theism. This I shall endeavour to do in as clear and short a way as I can, by first shewing, how the actions of God are at the same time necessary, voluntary, and good; and next, how the actions of men are necessary, voluntary, virtuous or vicious, and approveable or disapproveable, good in kind: And lastly, though imperfect, conspiring to the greatest good in the whole; and by this obviate your objections.

First, To be acted upon by another, I allow you, is an imperfection; and the Being, who acts in consequence of this, cannot properly be said to be active, but passive in his actions; and this cannot be the necessity by which God acts. But God acts by a necessity of his own nature, *i. e.* from his natural disposition, which is the spring of all his actions, and which is the thing, that denominates a Being, good, evil, or selfish. If it is a benevolent dispositi-

on, or a desire to communicate happiness to sensible beings, then it is called good : if it is a disposition to make sensible beings unhappy, then it is called evil : and if it is a disposition to pursue his own happiness, without regard either to the happiness or misery of other beings, but as these conduce to his own happiness, then it is called selfish.

And these denominations they take antecedently, to any action of the being, in order to these ends: so that what you say of goodness consisting in agency, is a mistaking the matter altogether; for the same action may be good, evil, or selfish, according to the disposition it flows from; and if we know that a being hath a kind or benevolent disposition, we call him a good being, though he be incapable to show it, or to act according to his kind intentions.

The natural disposition of God to communicate happiness, is the cause, the necessary cause, of his willing it, and of his knowledge and power being applied for this end. And thus it appears, that willing, and acting for the happiness of sensible beings, are the natural necessary effects of his natural disposition,

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which is necessarily benevolent or good. And so far as we are convinced of a being's acting necessarily from a benevolent or good-natural disposition, so much our love of that being, our trust in, and submission to him, encreaseth: so far is the notion of necessity, or of God's willing and acting necessarily in consequence of his natural disposition, from destroying religion, that it is the best foundation and encouragement of it. And granting that God designed the happiness of mankind, and that he hath perfect wisdom and power to contrive and execute the means of it, all mankind must be ultimately happy, as happy as their different constitutions and capacities will allow. Nor do I see a possibility of defeating this end, by introducing what tends to real or absolute evil, or final misery; neither do I see any thing in nature that tends this way, but the contrary. And further, I think, that all who go about to maintain the existence of any thing that tends to absolute evil, whether by God's ordination or permission, with his will or against it, arraign the goodness, wisdom, or power, of the Author and Preserver of nature,

though they would seem to cast the blame elsewhere. But these opinions flow not, I think, from any evil disposition, but from men's neglecting to follow the dictates of reason and nature, and following the prejudices of education, and an unwarrantable authority in matters of faith.

I come in the next place to consider the actions of men.

Secondly, The natural constitutions of dependent beings, whatever they be, are derived from God, the Author of all things; and the natural constitution of mankind, we experience, necessarily determines us to pursue pleasure, and avoid pain. And this natural disposition, or desire of happiness, is the cause, the necessary cause, of our willing it, and of our knowledge and power being applied to obtain this end. Our happiness, we find, is necessarily connected with that of other beings, and of the whole system. So that we cannot pursue our own happiness, without promoting in some degree, the happiness of the system of which we are parts or members.

The exercise of the social or public passions,

I called virtue, and not the necessary perception, and approbation of it, which I called a moral sense or conscience, as you mistake me to do. Now our natural desire of happiness being the general first principle of all our actions, and having several passions, private and public, exciting to this end; the passions and ideas springing up in our minds, and those excited in us from without, depend not upon our will, but on the will of the supreme Spirit, the Author of our nature, and circumstances: for we are under a necessity of thinking at all times, at least while awake, and by the constitution of our nature, being necessarily determined to pursue pleasure and avoid pain, this natural desire of happiness necessarily determines our will, and all our limited or imperfect faculties, or powers of thinking or acting, by reflecting, comparing, considering, or reasoning, to find out the means, and all our natural powers or abilities, to apply them for the obtaining of this end, and avoiding pain or misery: and thus it appears that our reflections, *etc.* though voluntary, are at the same time necessary, and that all our powers of willing,

reasoning, and acting, as well as these of perceiving, are the natural and necessary instruments of our natural disposition, or desire of happiness; and further, That virtue, though it be the necessary effect of a benevolent, kind, or good disposition; and vice the necessary effect of a selfish disposition, yet we necessarily approve or disapprove of them, as well at perceive them in ourselves and others.

Lastly, As no creatures can be made absolutely perfect, they must, of necessity, in proportion to their degrees of perfection and circumstances, or, through want of perfect knowledge, power, and advantageous circumstances, mistake, or fall short of their greatest happiness, which is connected with that of others. Hence, from the necessary imperfection of our dependent natures, ariseth all moral evil, which can infer no other punishment from the deity, but what is the natural effects of such mistakes; and this, in the natural constitution and course of things, tends to the improvement of the agent, by teaching and exciting him to act more consistently after; so that these mistakes are so far from tending to real or absolute evil,

that they tend to absolute good, with respect to the agent, and consequently to the system of which he is a part or member. And as a system or constitution, in its very notion, implies variety, and the nature of the thing requires it; so we see in this world an inconceivable variety of creatures, and among the several species of these, as great a variety of dispositions, or tempers, capacities, circumstances; and as great a variety of objects and events, suited to these, to answer the good ends of providence; and it is this gradation, and subordination, of creatures, this variety and difference of inclinations and pursuits, that makes so beautiful a contrast in the great **DRA-MA**; that lays a foundation for action, intercourse, and a plot, which is absolutely necessary for the happiness and improvement of mankind; and without which there could be no happiness but of the dullest sort, arising merely from the gratification of sensual appetite. From this consideration and view of things, it appears, that vice or moral evil, which is the necessary effect of the variously proportioned dispositions, tempers, passions,

reason, circumstances, *etc.* of men, is not only a necessary imperfection, that creatures cannot be made without (as shewn above) but is also necessary and absolutely fit and requisite to the beauty and happiness of the whole system, ordained and directed of God. A full delineation of these principles, and an illustration of them by instances, would fill a volume, which I have neither time nor abilities for ; but would be glad to see this subject fully treated by a proper hand. I am with sincerity, and gratitude, for your assistance in these speculations and enquiries,

Reverend Sir,

Your most humble Servant.

OCT. 8. 1736.

P. S. To give one instance to illustrate the above reasoning: persecution, and all its horrid terrible effects, is perhaps the greatest objection to this scheme of theism. To it I reply, that to permit it, comes to the same with

ordaining it; but if the ordaining serves a good end, even to the persecuted, and at the same time proceeds from no directly evil intention or disposition in the persecutors, where is the evil of ordaining it? yea rather, the ordaining of it would be necessary and fit to cause an overbalance of good in the whole scheme. The common belief, “that opinions recommend to the favour of God,” necessarily leads people of good tempers to bring others to believe so and so, first by gentle, then by any means; at last, when none prevail, to hate them, and treat them as God’s enemies. This is the natural source of persecution, good in itself, but arising from wrong notions of religion. As to the end persecution serves, I need not tell you, that tribulation or affliction is the school of many eminent virtues. Mr. Chandler informs us, “that, as the primitive Christians had any intervals from persecution, they became more profigate in their morals, and more quarrelsome in their tempers*.” The necessity then of persecution was evidently fit, and useful to

* Introduction to the History of the Inquisition. P. 18.

mend the tempers and morals of the persecuted, besides to be of good example to others.

To shut up all in a word; moral as well as natural evil must tend to final happiness, or absolute good in the whole system of things, though we cannot account for every appearance, and so is not sin or real evil; or else we must give up the perfections of the Deity, and take up with the most uncomfortable of all opinions, that of forlorn nature, and a fatherless world; except that more horrid one, of things being either willingly or weakly so constituted and directed, as to introduce sin or evil, destructive of rational and final happiness, equally impossible and absurd.

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L E T T E R. IX.

Reverend S I R,

THE favour of your's of October 20th, I received, and am hopeful we shall agree in all our sentiments that are of any moment.

You agree with me that matter is not an active substance, and yet you immediately add, " that it hath a power by its presence to the mind to excite ideas in it". If matter hath a power to excite ideas in the mind, it is certainly an active substance, contrary to what you before said : and indeed if matter be a substance, it must include activity and power. If people always kept the same idea or definition of substance, which is usually given of it, *viz.* " A thing subsisting by itself, independently of any other, the subject of accidents or qualities," much debate about substances might be spared ; for in this sense, there can be but one only substance, (as I have all along urged, and you have demonstrated in your Vindications) eternal, infinite, *etc.* In this proper sense of the word substance,

I think, you will not allow matter to be a substance, with the real properties of extension, power, *etc.*; but only a sensible object, which I cannot, as you do, distinguish from an idea or perception *: for ideas are the proper objects of sense, and God is the proper author, or immediate cause of both our senses and their objects. And ideas are sometimes, at least, excited in our minds, as in sleep, without the presence of external objects, and give us real pleasure or pain.

I always agree with you, that there is will, reason, agency, as well as disposition to use them in the Deity. But then this disposition, which we agree is benevolent or good, ("For the general mind can have no particular interest, but the general good, or good of the whole, and its own private good, must, of necessity, be one and the same†") is antecedent to them all, and they only the instruments of attaining the ends which this disposi-

* There is indeed a difference between the real immediate perception of an object, and reflection on that perception after.

† Characteristics, Vol I.

on or desire excites to. A being cannot be conceived to will, reason, or act for any end without first desiring it: so that I cannot understand, “ how God’s natural disposition to communicate happiness has a necessary foundation in his intelligence or reason.” This is making one attribute, *viz.* goodness, to be founded in another, *viz.* intelligence. One attribute in order of application does naturally and necessarily precede another; as first, Disposition towards an end; secondly, Willing it; thirdly, Reasoning about the means to it; and lastly, Executing them. And these attributes, infinite goodness, wisdom, and power, all founded in the divine substance, make up *God’s perfect character*, or what you may call divine rectitude; in consequence of which, all his works must of necessity be good, right, or according to his intention, absolutely happy; and this we call a reasonable end; because our moral sense approves of it, upon immediate perception. But whether or not there can be any successive desiring, willing, reasoning and acting in the divine mind, is what I presume not to determine, otherwise than as he animates

and influences all things, according to the opinion of the antient Stoics, but without being acted upon: for I can conceive of the divine operations in no other way. To reason or consider of the best means, he needs never do, as he intuitively knows all things. With him there can be no secondary cause, or motive of action; but his perfect desire is the immediate cause of his willing or acting according to his perfect knowledge. He wills, and it is done. But it is not always thus with dependent beings. We necessarily desire our own happiness: we will it; our imperfect intelligence makes us reason about the means of it: and our desire of happiness necessarily determines us to chuse what appears to our limited conceptions to be the best means, and to act accordingly.

A man, I own to you, may make himself miserable, or to suffer pain, for a little time, in view of a greater future good, if he will; and so he may make himself always or finally miserable, if he will; but then it is impossible for him to desire, and consequently to will final misery, as you suppose; and it is evident-

ly inconsistent with the divine goodness, to make us miserable (ultimately, so I mean, for present pain we may be ordained to suffer in order to future good) against our will. If our future existence is consistent with our happiness, (which consists in the gratification of our moral and public senses, as well as of our private senses; for all happiness or pleasure is sensitive, or perceived by a sense) as I doubt not it is; and who would desire it, if it is not? we have no more reason to doubt of it, whatever changes we may undergo, than of the divine goodness, and his perfect wisdom and power, to accomplish his good designs; for upon these, the continuance of our being entirely depends, as or present existence doth.

Dr. Clarke*, and all who contend for "its being God's will and intention, that rational beings should freely act, to make themselves happy or miserable," as you express it in your former letter, allow, "the necessity of the
 "various and different degrees of creatures for
 "displaying the infinite wisdom of the Crea-
 "tor, whereof, consequently some must be
 "less perfect than others, and so liable to a-

* Being and Attributes of God, P. 104. Edit. 7th.

“ buse their liberty” (which, by the way, is no more than a freedom from external impediments, or natural power to act or not to act, which is necessarily determined by the will, as that is by the agent) “ to the actual commission of evil.” Now, Sir, allowing this variety of creatures for the display of infinite wisdom in the Creator; yet if it was not as much for the display of perfect goodness, which can intend no final misery, or absolute evil in its government, that wisdom should give way to the superior quality or attribute of goodness: for what can we think of that wisdom which is not employed for a good end? Besides, to make creatures so imperfect, as to be liable to abuse their liberty, or rather under a necessity from their imperfect constitution to mistake evil for good, and yet to expect and require that these imperfect beings should never so mistake, or abuse their liberty, is a plain absurdity; and to punish them merely for so doing, is evident injustice and wickedness: for moral obligations can extend no further than natural possibilities. It is to no purpose to reply, that they have a natural power to act in another manner, a power to do good as well as evil; for if they

want desire strong enough to surmount all obstacles to good, and a capacity of reason to discover the best means to it, their natural power, which is but an instrument, cannot be applied to it; and if moral evil is sin, or real evil, why ordain any thing that hath a greater tendency than another, as less perfect creatures, to bring it about? The truth is,—“ Things cannot be otherwise, or in another manner, or in any other respect different from what they are,” whatever we may imagine, “ as they proceed from perfect power, directed by perfect wisdom and goodness:” for if we suppose an alteration of the effects, we must suppose, at the same time, an alteration in the cause, which is impossible: necessary goodness, with perfect wisdom and power subservient to it, is an unalterable steady principle of action; a system or constitution without variety, gradation, and subordination, mutual correspondency, and relation of parts, is a natural impossibility and absurdity. Variety, gradation, and subordination of creatures, with as great a variety of dispositions, tempers, capacities, circumstances, and as great a variety of objects, and events corresponding to these, so as to

constitute the world properly one administration or government, cannot be conceived otherwise, without destroying the nature of the thing, and the beauty and happiness of the whole. Suppose the contrary, for we may suppose what in fact cannot take place, *viz.* an equality of dispositions, capacities, circumstances of any one species of creatures; for example, men; and let them be supposed of any degree of perfection you please, so as never to commit one fault or wrong to others, and you will immediately see the absurdity of such a supposition. It destroys the very being of a constitution or government, and all foundation for action, hope, improvement, and happiness, except of the dullest kind. What could such a set of beings do? or how employ themselves? where could be the foundation for good offices? or for the exercise of the noblest passions, of generosity, compassion, fortitude, *etc.* if their corresponding objects were not ordained? If there was no vice, moral evil, or mistakes, interfering of interests, competitions, *etc.* there could be as little virtue, or moral good. There could

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be no society here, no need of laws and their functions, no ground of debates to improve the understanding. In a word, there could be no foundation for growing in either knowledge or goodness, if such a scheme was not laid for contracting acquaintance with men and things, for converse, correspondence, mutual good offices, *etc.*: and this can only be where there is variety of tempers, capacities, inclinations and pursuits, and as great variety of corresponding objects and events. And such is the present best constitution, where all the variety of things are so contempered and adjusted by infinite wisdom and power as to produce the greatest happiness or absolute good of the whole, which cannot possibly be altered for the worse, while perfect goodness presides.

After all; if we seriously and attentively look into ourselves, where our knowledge is most certain, we find that the universal Genius or Mind animates and influences us all, *works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure* towards general universal good or happiness, and this without so much as our considering of, or knowing the real ends of our ac-

tions. Our appetites, passions, desires, (that are very many, suited to all kinds of objects presented to us, and which depend upon our constitution, of which God is the Author) prompt, excite, or indeed cause us to act for the preservation of the individual, and good of society, when none of these ends are in our view. Children eat, drink, sleep, *etc.* without any such view as self-preservation, but are altogether influenced by their nature, or rather the Author of it, to these ends. Men are the same way influenced, and experience only tells them of the final causes of these appetites, passions, or movements; and then they knowingly concur with these excitements. It is the same with the benevolent passions or movements; and men even promote public good, when they intend only private advantage. And when there are competitions among the passions, private with private, public with public, or private and public, the strongest always carries it, and necessarily determines us to act, with more or less consideration, and sometimes with no consideration at all, according to the strength of it.

Brutes, less perfect creatures than man, are influenced in the same manner, by their passions or instincts. And indeed so insensible is the gradation among beings, that some men differ little from brutes; and if moral obligation was in proportion to natural power or agency, in which some place the idea of liberty and accountableness, idiots and brutes have often the greatest share of it; and therefor would be under the greatest moral obligation; which is evidently absurd. It is plain then, that it is the strength and balance of the passions, affections, or inclinations, and the strength of reason and judgment, which depend upon their constitutions, and their external circumstances, that cause men to act in this or in that manner, as the Author of our nature and circumstances ordains and directs. And thus we are intended by providence, and made instruments of good to one another, and to the whole, without our directly knowing or intending it in every case; and as we improve in knowledge, so as to see plainly that the general good, and our own private good is the same, our natural disposition or desire of good or happi-

ness will necessarily determine our will and natural powers, to concur with the general intention or design, and we shall be more and more perfect, and happy, in proportion as our natural desires of private and public good (for we have instincts to them both, and both being connected together, the means to both are the same) and our capacities to advance them encrease by discipline, experience, use, or practice, which strengthens all desires, habits, and practical principles.

It may be objected here, that practice strengthens vitious habits, as well as virtuous habits. To this it may be answered, That there is a very great difference between them; virtuous habits are attended with a growing pleasure, and spoil no organ, as not depending on the body; but vitious, or entirely selfish habits, which few contract, (they being always mixt,) the more we indulge them, give always less and less pleasure. The organ becomes more and more unfit, till at length it is entirely destroyed by death, which seems only a change of state, where we may retain our habits of goodness, virtue, reason and knowledge,

while the more selfish appetites, or desires and habits of vice, though necessary, and of use in this infant state, may be dropt here with the body. But still that new and more perfect state must be supposed a society, where a gradation, and subordination of more improved creatures will obtain; which only can lay a foundation for improvement in goodness, knowlege, virtue, and happiness, to eternity.

Having now explained myself on the subjects before us, so as you understand me; I hope we shall agree in our sentiments about them, though differently expressed, as men will readily do, who have no other view, but to follow nature and truth in their researches; at least, if we happen to differ in our conceptions of things, we shall do it with becoming grace and charity. I am, with truth and perfect esteem,

Reverend Sir,

Your most humble Servant.

Nov. 2. 1736.

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